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ROCHE-BLANCHE;

OR, THE

HUNTERS OF THE PYRENEES.

A ROMANCE.

BY MISS ANNA MARIA PORTER,

[illegible]

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER ROW.
1822.

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By MISS ANNA MARIA PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE VILLAGE OF MARIENDORPT," &c.

O 'tis a gallant vessel! but the wind
Strives fiercely in her sails: each sleety blast
Rifles her shrouds; while the froth'd brine o'ertops
Her topmast's head. -- Hark to that pealing gust!
It roll'd along the mountainous waves, as 'twere
Thunder 'mong Alps; or the dread voice of doom. --
Brother spirit! think you this bark will 'scape,
Or all her freight of goodly virtues, be
Wreck'd by yon treach'rous rock? Woe's me, there's one
Upon the lofty shore, straining each sense;
With cries and clasped hands asking to save,
Who if voice answer'd him, or instinct taught
Which wave might bear him right, would instant plunge
Into the yawning gulph; so to attain
And share, like fate with this lone bark! *MS. Poem.*

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ROCHE BLANC;

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CHAPTER I.

Not long after this period, the queen-dowager's remaining influence was demonstrated. The limited indulgence she had asked for the Hugonots was granted; and the royal promise given of speedily issuing an order for the assembling of the states-general, within the space of six months after the proclamation of such order.

Condé accepted this concession of the court with unsuspicious joy; gracing

that lofty scorn of his private wrongs which kept him from urging them when general interests were agitating, by showing the king that he relied on his royal word, and required no pledge for its performance. He withdrew at once from the capital to his own chateau, where his consort's illness still called him, leaving his nephew to act in his stead for the Hugonots, who were likely enough still to require some protecting medium between them and the inferior agents of their oppressors.

No office could have been selected, affording more dangerous facilities to the embryo views of Adhemar, than this very situation. It gave the reformed of every rank free and natural access to him; and it brought him more frequently into contact with the queen-mother, through whom he preferred the complaints of such as suffered by unwarranted infringements of the king's late indulgences.

Clarence Willoughby had eagerly ac-

cepted the Prince de Condé's permission to remain as assistant to his friend; and with him, consequently, Adhemar discussed the continued grievances of the people from whom their sovereign was in a manner locked up; reprobating, also, the odious, because unsatisfactory task, of every day struggling for the redress of injuries with the very ministers whose secret instructions gave license to them all.

Clarence's nature was too full of generous fire, to hear such things unmoved: their repetition gradually stirred him into such impatience of the peaceful measures adopted by the leading men amongst the Hugonots, that he one day ventured to doubt their propriety, in the presence of the most enlightened and virtuous of their party. Clarence's gallant conduct, during the campaigns of Picardy, was fresh in Coligny's memory; and, pleased with the ingenuous ardor of the young soldier's present questioning,

he took the trouble to explain to him the principles of that conduct which had otherwise remained of doubtful merit. In doing this, he gave deep and useful lessons in the difficult science of political integrity! For Coligny taught the doctrine of true patriotism, which combines love of our fellow-subjects, with fidelity to our king, and obedience to law, — lighting in his hearer's youthful breast, its first fire for his own country. From this moment Clarence ceased to blame the heroic patience with which these virtuous leaders were awaiting either redress, or the instant in which open resistance could be openly justified: — and from the same period his thoughts began to dwell with greater frequency and anxiety upon the result of his father's attendance in England, which must determine whether he would ever have a country thus to devote his hand and heart to, or be left to pay back the obligation of subsistence and protection

by foreign service, under foreign princes. Not even Clarence's grateful attachment to the house of Bourbon, nor his devoted affection to its youngest member, could reconcile him now to the prospect of remaining an alien from the birth-place of his fathers. The affections of his soul, hitherto untrained and exuberant, were rapidly assuming a fixed form, and a right direction: his idolatry of Adhemar de Bourbon was becoming enlightened, observing friendship; his taste for indiscriminate amusement, rising into a passion for excitements of a higher character, — for the movement of great interests and great efforts. As yet, these new feelings could be only aspirations after such objects; his youth and inexperience unfitting him for taking the lead in any act of public importance: but it was much, at his age, to have acquired a relish for nobler things than he could yet compass; it made him press on towards new attainments with new energy; and gradually

withdrew him from the only danger Aigline de Venzéles feared for him, the danger of being too much lauded for inferior graces, by such as courted him into vanity, and wastefulness of better qualities. What path, however, can man chuse in this labyrinth of life, which has not its peculiar peril to menace him? The passions threaten in all. Mean offences swarm in one track; — dark crimes in another: and he that has entered the road to laudable distinction, with the fairest purpose for his guide, has not unfrequently found his accompanying angel changed into the fiend Ambition.

The momentous state of public affairs in France, and his own intimate connexion with the great personages most interested in them, habituated Clarence's thoughts to subjects of profound interest; these naturally indisposed him for lighter things, and as he resorted less and less to the brilliant pageants which had at

first captivated him, tenderer affections grew more upon his heart. He mused over the remembrance of Aigline with increasing fondness; blending the hope of her with all his expectations in England. Unlike most lovers, hope, with him, preponderated over fear: he was naturally sanguine; and the character of Aigline's regard for him had ever been so lively, that he could scarcely doubt his power of heightening it hereafter to whatever degree circumstances might warrant.

Little did he dream how fatal an enemy was at this time working against him, in the shape of that very devotedness and submissiveness of nature which gave Aigline's other affections, when sanctified by the name of duties, wider command over her fate!

Without suspecting the depth of his friend's meditations, seeing him immersed in them, Clarence fancied de Bourbon's thoughts had some subject upon which

they preyed to the detriment of his looks, his spirits, his health: conscious himself of the power of one tender thought, he naturally suspected that such abstraction arose from recollection of Lolóttę; and while he wondered at, and pitied him, for such fatal sensitiveness to mere beauty, he only loved him the more for the self-mastery his conduct manifested.

The occurrences of every day, their occasional studies and exercises together, the characters amongst whom they acted, and the anxious situation of Clarence's own concerns, furnished them with sufficient topics of conversation, without requiring either to talk of what the one blushed at as a degradation, and the other had become too recently sensible of, to mention unquestioned. Even in a man's breast, true love retains its bashfulness.

Matters of love, indeed, were not in harmony either with the times, or the individual situation of these friends:

such themes, consequently, were never alluded to in their confidential discourses. Yet often did the tearful vision of Lolótte cross the Chevalier in the midst of his musings upon subjects far different, entrancing him for a few brief moments, only to leave him plunged in deeper gloom.

The sentiment this unhappy beauty had awakened in him, rendered him more insensible than ever to the practised graces of calculating charmers, while it convinced him that he was no longer capable of bending under the yoke of a merely ambitious marriage. Thus more strongly concentrated upon one point, his spirit cleaved to that with distempered tenacity; and brooding there over images of its own creation, gradually became familiarized with dangerous and doubtful results.

Meanwhile Clarence and he pursued their ordinary course of intimate companionship. In the mornings business

and study occupied them: only in the evenings did they mix with general society. The widowhood of the queen-mother limited her parties during the early months of mourning, to a sort of privacy little suited to her magnificent taste and far-stretching views: but the young queen seemed bent upon exalting the past splendour of the Louvre; and at her court, the Chevalier, secretly aiming at other objects, regularly appeared, with Clarence Willoughby at his side.

Unapprized of his friend's motives, Clarence at first beheld this with surprize; and, at last, with joy: receiving it as a proof that the Chevalier was become properly resolute to show, that no personal mortifications should daunt him from the part he had taken, of appearing publicly as the representative of his uncle, and the advocate of the oppressed. Clarence had for some time been watching him with great trepidation: for scarcely a day, an hour passed, that did not bring

with it bitterer testimonies of ingratitude, or hollow-hearted attachment. Besides inferior followers, many of the nobility, whom selfish views had enlisted on the side of the princes while their chance for highest power was greater than that of the Guises, rapidly fell off to the faith and faction of their rivals; seeking places and profit from them, by making a sort of merit in affecting to treat the Bourbons with contumely.

On the first shock of this common occurrence, Adhemar de Bourbon had in truth appeared to totter; but quickly recovering, — incited by visionary views unseen by Clarence — he had all at once thrown off his accustomed habit of seclusion and reserve, and seemed determined to breast, if he could not avoid the humiliation of seeing his dependants of former days studiously preferred before their master. Though ever proverbial for the Spartan simplicity of his table and his pleasures, (thus marking his

individual tastes,) the nobleness of de Bourbon's residences, and the quality of his retinue, allowed no one to forget that he was a peer of France, and the descendant of its kings: hence, there were some persons that had always believed him averse to the pageant ceremonials of court, solely from the fear of having his public place disputed; and they were consequently astonished to see him appear at a court domineered over by his enemies, precisely at the moment when he had nothing to support him there, except the consciousness of desert, and the timorous approbation of a few overawed friends.

After circumstances, and a report purposely circulated by the queen-mother, seemed to furnish a solution to this, — quite satisfactory to all that were accustomed to traffic intrinsic for false honour.

It was said that Catherine hoped to effect the brave Chevalier's conversion to

the true faith; and that he, allured by the prospect of a great marriage in her power to achieve for him, was inclined either to become a Catholic, or to affect as though he wished it.

Clarence smiled at such reports; believing in the queen-mother's wish of gaining such a distinguished proselyte, but, well aware of his friend's attachment to the principles in which his uncle had early instructed him, and his indifference to the young heiress in question, he had no fear of his stability. The report, however, agitated religious questions oftener between the friends than had been wont with them, and produced the effect of both agreeing that it would be well to give Catherine's confessor a hearing on controverted points; thus lending greater force and publicity to the fact of de Bourbon's adherence to the doctrine of the reformed. This was done: and both the Protestant disputants, previously strengthened by the communicated learn-

ing and arguments of their own spiritual teachers, maintained their opinions with a steadiness and ability, which soon rendered it impossible for the Catholic divine to hope any thing more from them than sincere respect for his zeal.

While these serious objects occasionally occupied their mornings, Clarence, pleased to cultivate social inclinations in the friend whose morbid sensitiveness might otherwise increase to actual malady, urged Adhemar to bestow many of his evenings on the parties of the two queens, lending all the spirit of his own warm heart, and charming powers, to animate the gorgeous scene with life and interest. But it was still only a painted show in the sight of de Bourbon: — that, which to his spell-seized eye, had a local habitation and a name, was far beyond, obscured in clouds: — to that, these court-galas were merely unimportant passages. From Mary's drawing-room, he could pass to the select suppers

of the queen-mother without suspicion; and discourse with her apart at intervals, unsuspected of any higher aim than gaining her patronage of his suit with the wealthy heiress, by listening to her arguments on the infallibility of the pope.

The etiquette of her mourning excluded the queen-mother from public diversions; her amusements were, therefore, necessarily drawn from the persons habitually surrounding her; and as not only Clarence Willoughby, but his graver friend, were celebrated for their accomplishments, their invitation to her parties excited no surprize.

Clarence, animated or interested, was the most delightful of companions: whether it were his heart or his imagination that was roused, either made him, for the time of its complete dominion, a bright point to which every eye turned while present, every memory when withdrawn. Whatever talent he then exer-

cised, or whatever new acquirement he attempted, was attended with felicitous success; but deny him the exciting feeling, and he either made no attempt to shine, or did it imperfectly.

Adhemar de Bourbon, on the contrary, did all things well, at all times. Nature had bestowed on him from his birth, that fairy-gift which makes it impossible for the performer to fail in his expected aim, whatever be his mood. He had been admirably educated; and master of every principle of the arts he practised but at request—(rarely from his own impulse) the graces of his body, the natural melody of his voice, and the sort of character he stamped upon the most trivial thing, rendered his mode of reciting a poem, or embodying the ideal hero of a masque, a standard for which no one wished to substitute their own previous notions. The indifference with which he laid aside the lute in which his finger and voice had created a living soul,

—nay, the very abstraction with which he moved away from the stately dance wherein his graceful movements had been conspicuous, were picquant novelties, which gave a zest to the admiration won by the accomplishments themselves. Reappearing of a sudden, in circles which he had only just entered while a youth, and retired from almost immediately in disgust and mortification, the Chevalier de Bourbon became a subject of equal curiosity and admiration to such persons of both sexes as sought favour from their royal mistress, by buzzing round the object that had attractions for her, or were themselves eager of new excitements. Neglecting their former favourite Clarence Willoughby, these creatures of levity, the titled servants of the queen-dowager, rushed towards the rarer character of a young warrior, pronounced as cold as captivating; emulous who should admire him most, and be the most admired by him in return.

Clarence enjoyed this ebb of the tide with much of his old mirthfulness: he laughed at his shrunk honours in honest truth; even while deriving from it a most wholesome lesson for the disciplining vain conceits in future. The Chevalier treated it with disdainful composure. Courtiers and women were not the slaves he deemed a triumph graced by; and he went on, mechanically bearing his part in the brilliant scene, simply because he must pass through that road to the objects he sought.

The young Englishman, now no longer the fashion, found himself neither importuned by others, nor seduced by his own vanity, from acquaintance which were gradually completing what Adhemar de Bourbon's single society had begun. One companion, however excellent, cannot perfect a character: — the collision and contact of several, are necessary to impart a variety of knowledge, and of liberal judgments; and in pro-

gressive intimacy with persons of sterling reputation habituated to mix together, Clarence found not only compensation for the occasional losses of his friend's company, but improvement in every valuable acquisition.

That mixture of manly ardor and youthful playfulness which continued to mark his conversation, rendered him interesting and delightful to men of soberer habits, who, finding in his principles the germ of noble action, loved to develope and fix these, for his own sake, while enjoying for their own the exhilarating quality of his peculiar gaiety.

Clarence, therefore, attracted more frequently into circles where he found all the life, spirit, and excitement which had at first seemed to him engrossed by mere assemblies, or exhibitions for pleasure or bodily exercise — learned to look on the spirited encounter of keen intellect, with as lively an interest as he had formerly done upon the personal address

of two combatants in the lists — learned also to pursue, with those qualified to lead him on, a difficult question in morals or science, with greater eagerness than he had ever chased the game of his native mountains.

From the nature of his religious tenets, Clarence's intimacies were principally amongst the professors of a similar creed: for with all his impetuosity and avidity of new ideas, he had ever preserved the most affectionate desire of acting in conformity with his absent father's wishes. Mr. Willoughby at parting, had exhorted him to chuse his intimates and his models from amongst men of the right religion; his associates of the hour, he knew must often be otherwise. Clarence was, consequently, led by filial obedience, in his court of the great Hugonot leaders; to whom he could listen with perfect confidence upon every subject important to manhood, and unstudied by youth. Conviction of the fidelity of his guides, was

a circumstance peculiarly desirable by one, that, seized with a passion for usefulness, now bent the whole force of his soul to the task of gathering up instruction for after life: trusting that Providence would one day call him to the honourable destiny of sharing the councils, and partaking in the glories of his own country.

Glowing with this new enthusiasm which the important interests around him had first excited, Clarence's habitual hilarity was not diminished by the gradual decrease of his relish for scenes of mere amusement: when there, he was as delightfully animated as ever, though not so diffusively; giving himself oftener to favoured individuals than he used to do, and thus enabling those who made it their business, to watch the developement of his character, and guess pretty accurately at its changes.

A man's tastes and principles are commonly deducible from the society he

affects most; and the queen-mother, who, in former days, was accustomed to see the inexperienced Willoughby eager only for vivid impressions without questioning their nature, impatient of state discourses, and sensitive to every attention, seeing him now take the most earnest share in discussions which involved great principles of government and morals, resolutely maintaining those he adopted though doubted sometimes by his friend Adhemar, thought it high time to study him more narrowly. The principal features of Clarence's character were unalterable: frankness, intrepidity of soul, and vivacity of attachment: thus, all his new friendships and venerations lay upon the surface, for every one to note. Catherine, often lending her ear to his vehement discourse with others, heard him speak of Coligny, Condé, and men like them in subordinate stations, with an emphasis of admiration which convinced her that all the speaker's powerful pas-

sions were enlisted on the side of public virtue; all his notions chivalric — and that as no equivalent could be offered him for the sacrifice of self-approbation on such points, he must be tried and tempted by softer and less-dreaded feelings. The Chevalier himself in praising his friend, (by way of apologizing for their friendship,) had avowed his influence over his mind, or rather betrayed it, together with the ground of that influence, namely, the perfect assurance he felt of Clarence's enthusiastic affection; and Catherine, instantly perceiving the necessity of winning that to her side, or wresting it from its present hold if she would sway de Bourbon hereafter, applied herself to the work of involving his unsuspecting friend in the toils of some criminal though tender passion.

The unguarded eyes of a young and lovely marchioness had revealed to the queen-mother the secret of her unlawful admiration for Clarence, and her willing-

ness to overleap duty in compassing its return. Her passion, her ties, and Clarence's honourable unsuspiciousness, were instruments of importance. The queen-mother called them into action without committing herself even to her ready victim. A word adroitly dropped at one time, a pitying sigh at another, insensibly informed Clarence that the beautiful person whom accident frequently placed under his care in the royal gardens, or saloon, was unequally yoked to an old and odious partner, and that some unknown cause in addition was consuming her life. This impression made, and his kindly attentions thus secured, he suddenly found himself after a few more suppers in the queen's apartments, made almost a property of, by the wife of another. At first he thought this the effect of chance; but it was soon impossible for him to think so, or to mistake the unguarded manner of his companion, and he rapidly retreated

from one so dangerous. After some purposed absences from the scenes where his syren appeared, he returned to receive a disgust from which he never recovered. Catherine de Medicis, presuming too quickly upon the vanity or susceptibility of one so ardently alive to every authorized show of kindness, called his attention to the desolated looks of her beautiful attendant, in a tone that forcibly recalled to him Condé's accusations against her purity of heart. He recoiled with horror from the guilt she almost invited him to; and, undisciplined yet in the management of right impulses, said something so indiscreetly expressive of his sentiments, that it stung her pride and alarmed her policy. Irritated as disappointed, Catherine's resolution was from that moment taken; and determining upon excluding him from the dangerous schemes in which she hoped to involve the Chevalier de Bourbon, she deemed the utter ruin of Clarence an easier

achievement than warping or blinding his moral principle. She, therefore, affected to consider him afterwards, merely as she did others in the crowd of young courtiers; and Clarence, though occasionally doubting his own judgment, was rather relieved than mortified by her seeming oblivion of him.

Had Adhemar de Bourbon been habitually communicative, inviting to the minor confidences of those he lived with — perhaps the most important confidences of life, — or rather, had not the stamp of awe which impressed the first acquaintance of these friends remained where it was first placed, upon the heart of the younger, Catherine de Medicis had failed in this one object. But Clarence was accustomed to obey the humour of Adhemar; and as Adhemar's attention seemed daily more demanded by graver interests, Clarence would have deemed it folly or lurking vanity to mix with them the petty histories of his own

unsought conquests. In the scandalous disagreement between the promises and the performances of the Guises to the Bourbon princes, and in speculations of whither this might lead the great Condé, his thoughts found other subjects of indignant or anxious consideration; and, discussing these with his friend, he soon forgot circumstances which the cherished image of a pure affection had divested of all power over his integrity.

It was the practice of Adhemar to receive those who came to him in behalf of others or themselves, alone: — the practice began from just consideration of possible restraint to the complainants from the presence of witnesses; and was soon continued by policy. Clarence, therefore, knew not all that passed between his friend and those that visited him; although his business was to transmit to the Prince of Condé at Meaux, what he was thus told and commissioned to repeat. But he knew enough not to

be surprised at the frequent conferences of Jean de Rénaudie with the Chevalier; and he honoured the zeal with which this intrepid agent of the reformed sought and amassed materials for the justification of his brethren, when the penalties and pains inflicted upon them were said to be provoked by some outrage on their part: he honoured equally the steadiness with which the Chevalier demanded reparation of the court for similar infringements of their late compact. He was far from suspecting that both the saintly agent and the public advocate, while they were thus feigning dependance upon the sincerity of high authorities, and complaining only of instruments, were, in fact, contemplating violent methods of effecting their desired objects. During their occasional interviews, Rénaudie had boldly unveiled to Adhemar the scheme of an extensive confederacy abroad and at home, which he had himself nearly ripened, and for

the perfection of which there only required the promised co-operation of some great crowned head like the sovereign of England, to guarantee the integrity of the confederates' intentions; and the arm of a Bourbon to strike with them. The object of this league was declared to be simply the removal of the Guises from their tyranny over both prince and people. None but motives of pure patriotism, regulated by the strictest principle of loyalty, were sanctioned by the framer of the scheme; and as Adhemar listened to its details, he saw that in becoming either a sharer, or a leader, he could well answer the action to God and his conscience.

Every day's events testified the duplicity, and the destructive designs of the Guise party — confiscations and imprisonment of the Protestants still proceeded under different pretences. No writs were yet issued for the assembling of the national council; a convincing proof that

the queen-mother's assertion was true; and that while the present ministers dictated to their sovereign, that awful organ of the people would never be permitted to speak. What, then, was wanting to legitimate an attempt to obtain freedom of conscience and security of property for his fellow-citizens? Rénaudie, who had always treated the promises of the court with scorn, had made some ineffectual attempts, through other channels, to obtain the Prince de Condé's co-operation; but the latter rejected every proposal for organizing any plan against the existing government, until the period were elapsed that he had pledged himself to await. De Bourbon confessed that all attempts to move his uncle, when once his word had been given for contrary conduct, would be useless — nay, that such efforts might endanger the whole affair, if his notions of duty and honour went so far as thinking himself bound to give information of the scheme he dis-

approved. Adhemar, however, was ready to stake his life and fortunes with the confederates, — to lend his name to the enterprize, and his counsel to its maturing; and if, when all were ready, and the measure of national wrong full, neither of his uncles sought such a mode of justice, he was willing, he said, to take the danger and responsibility upon himself.

The moral and military reputation of Adhemar, his present active station for the Protestants, and, above all, his name of Bourbon, were advantages which none combined to such a degree as himself — and Rénaudie, aware of their effect under his management, decided upon securing him for assistant or leader, as future circumstances might determine. The subject was then fully discussed between them.

To guard against discovery of their plan, it was judged best to commit the visible agency of every thing to Rénaudie, whose previous employment and spiritual

profession familiarized observers with his journeyings to and fro, and his sort of inquisition into the consciences and feelings of his brother Protestants. His visits to the Chevalier were henceforth to be less frequent; other modes of communication being attainable by a little contrivance — and it was not until all things were adjusted, or called for by some urgent necessity, that Adhemar was to appear personally upon the scene.

Satisfied as he was with the powers and influence of his new colleague, Rènaudie well knew the importance of Condé's sanction to satisfy the scrupulous and animate the timid, in a scheme which might in fact be intended to overthrow the government instead of the ministers. He, therefore, hesitated not to circulate the name of a Bourbon leader, with such mystery and address, amongst the persons he had gained or sought to gain over, that numbers daily gathered to him on the faith of a name

venerated by every honest Frenchman; and those already associated, became confident in the virtue of their purpose.

This bold projector, burning with religious zeal, and with something of the same spirit as those he denounced, cared not who fired the train at last, so it were but once well laid: his business was to amass fearful material. This he continued to do with such ability and secrecy, that private meetings took place all over France, Germany, Switzerland and England, unsuspected by the French rulers: measures were digesting, inferior officers appointing, the great leader designated obscurely, though confidently, and every thing preparing for the sudden eruption of the volcano. Money, however, was wanting, together with supplies of arms: these were procurable only from the bounty of foreign princes, and Rénaudie quitted France to seek them in England, or, if not there, in Denmark.

Believing his scheme known but to

those who, either from religious or political motives, were resolutely hostile to the intolerant house of Guise, he departed in full confidence of his secret's safety. He guessed not that the most dangerous person in the court would soon be in possession of it: one who had no guiding principle but self-interest in every action; whose resentments and partialities could be quenched in an instant, if any advantage to herself were to be its consequence; and who was more to be dreaded, either as friend or enemy, than the Guises themselves; because there was no calculating upon the degree or continuance of any one of her apparent inclinations.

Their bigotry never belied itself; they obeyed what they believed the commands of a God — though that God was a Moloch: — Catherine de Medicis obeyed no divinity but her own will.

Luckily for this unprincipled woman's views, she had been the first to agitate

the question of political resistance with Adhemar de Bourbon, ere he was bound to caution by Jean de Rénaudie: broadly hinting the power she had to animate all her own adherents with whatever sentiments she might hereafter choose to abide by. The compassion she affected for the Hugonots, and the starving servants of her late husband, and the real energy with which she spoke of her gradual banishment from her son's confidence — nay, of late, almost from his society, by the machinations of those that enthralled him, — led Adhemar first to hope, and lastly to believe, in her sincere desire of allying herself to the Hugonot party. Although she avowed the most flattering earnestness for his conversion to her religion; nay, had sent her confessor to enlighten him in it, she did it with such liberal concessions in favour of the new doctrines, and she showed such abhorrence of persecution, by interposing

whenever it was possible for the protection of the persecuted, that de Bourbon was not surprized when she distinctly expressed a wish that some understanding might take place between the two parties, Catholic and Protestant, who considered themselves aggrieved; an understanding which might render them strong enough to overpower the strength of the relentless and insolent Guises.

Drawn on by her unperceived arts, step by step, from assent to discussion, from hesitation to confidence, Adhemar imperceptibly imbibed the persuasion of her being unjustly considered by his own especial party; and was, therefore, more easily induced to credit her after assurances that the prejudice against her in the minds of Condé and Coligny, which he well knew they entertained, would throw alarm and confusion amongst their adherents, should they, or any belonging to them, be too early informed of her wish to join in an attempt for restoring

justice, and establishing freedom of conscience throughout France.

Catherine had early discovered the great fault of de Bourbon's character — quick susceptibility of suspicion; and perhaps she was as well aware, that the misery of such characters consists in their doubting where they ought to trust, and believing what they ought to doubt. Thus even the most suspicious person may be beguiled into rash confidence, by artful ability. She was as quick to see whither his individual wishes pointed: but affecting blindness on both subjects, she used them the more surely as engines for his subjugation. So ably did she mix enviable eulogiums upon his uncle Condé's martial renown, with surprize at the small use he had made of this to obtain the extension of family honours; so well did she inspire doubts, not only of his prudence in conducting a great political enterprize, but his willingness afterwards to exert the power it

might give him of bringing forward such a rival as his nephew, — that she revived all de Bourbon's vexation at his uncle; and made him pause upon the question again, of whether he might or might not, without future remorse, act singly in an enterprize, which, if gloriously achieved, must make public gratitude and public honours his undivided portion?

Insensibly surrounded, while with the queen-mother, by an atmosphere of subtle and delicate flattery, Adhemar's soul was enfeebled by it, his clearest perceptions confused, his best principles rendered dizzy: — by degrees she possessed herself of the whole secret of Rénaudie, as the latter gradually unfolded it to him; and, ravished with the prospect this afforded her of speedily revenging the affronts of her daughter-in-law, and re-establishing her own power on the ruins of Mary's uncles, — with views not much unlike those Condé had attributed to her, she entered with really

full heart into the confederacy. Had Catherine sought only the overthrow of her domestic enemies in the persons of the Guises, she might have promoted the call of the states-general; but the same national voice which would then demand the dismissal of present ministers, would infallibly associate the Protestant members of the house of Bourbon with herself in the government; and she would as surely become secondary to that inflexibly-disinterested Condé, whose characteristic qualities would be so many hated sentinels over her further designs. It was her interest, therefore, to join the Guise faction in their attempts to delay, with the purpose of finally frustrating, the meeting of the national council. In doing this, she would promote two main objects: she would cheat them into a belief of her cordial assistance to repress the daring spirit of the people; while, by so tempting ministers to more profligate attempts on public rights, she would be

increasing the motives and the determination of the confederates. The violent expulsion of the Guises would, she knew, bestow upon the contrivers of such a national benefit authority to seize their vacant places: if she shared the enterprize, she must share the power: and if she meant to secure herself from sudden reverse, she must consent to preserve the union of the two religious parties, by allowing the Protestants to have their representative in the state of equal authority and rank with herself. Who was this to be? If Condé, how was she to render his power but nominal? What bribe could be found to purchase his acquiescence in the despotism she wished, when he had not one selfish aim in his pursuit of national objects?

But if Anthony of Navarre, or even Adhemar de Bourbon were associated with her a while, both these had passions or weaknesses by which they might finally be rendered subordinate to her, or be

hurried to their ruin. Catherine, therefore, determined that Condé should be excluded from the confederacy: and to ensure this, her first object was to unsettle Adhemar's confidence in his uncle's affection and political ability. Her next step was to urge her own immediate reason for excluding the prince from their secret; for delay in communicating to Rénaudie, and for wholly concealing from the other confederates until the blow was struck, her interest in their success.

If any indiscretion or private ill-will were to reveal her share in the affair to the Guises, they could easily inspire the king, she said, with such personal jealousies and apprehensions of her, as might produce the most dismal consequences, or at least banish her from the heart of her son, and take from her the guardianship of her younger children. For such calamities there could be no compensation

to a mother; and Catherine, while insisting upon her generous desire of risking every thing for the public good, threw herself upon the best sympathies of Adhemar for inviolable secrecy. The promise she won from him—for she extorted nothing — extended to Clarence: she feared his juster estimate of her character and that of Condé; and she charmed de Bourbon to reluctant reserve with him, by arguments speciously noble. She represented the cruelty of involving one so young, whom no stake in the country would repay, in a scheme of such doubtful result and perilous execution: as the native of a Protestant country, she urged, suspicion was always on the watch over him; and, upon the first real ground, might employ the rack to extort discoveries. He belonged, also, to the Prince de Condé; and whatever were his friendship for Adhemar, duty bound him to the prince. Who was to say whither

the latter notion might carry him, when entrusted with a secret which threatened danger or mortification to his master?

Adhemar feebly combated these arguments; for his truest affections were at variance on the subject. He yearned for full disclosure to his friend; and the more forcibly, as selfish objects receded from his eyes, and public ones grew upon him in size and importance. But he shuddered at exposing him to danger: he thought of Clarence's father; and he yielded with a sigh to the plausible reasonings of the queen.

Catherine was perfect in the art of casting just as much apparent slight upon the persons she wished to appear careless of, as was necessary to blind lookers-on; and she exercised this art so adroitly, during her private correspondence with Adhemar de Bourbon, that even her closest spies, the creatures of the house of Lorraine, never once imagined her less than wearied with his importunity

for the Hugonots, and constrained by his austerely-moral presence. Guise and his Cardinal brother had yet to learn that Catherine de Medicis united the most insatiable thirst for power, with the most unbridled love of pleasure. They attributed her zeal for the Chevalier de Bourbon's conversion, and her complaisance to his friends, to a sudden passion for himself: and when they saw her almost as suddenly discontinue former suits for his party, and neglect his society, they rashly decided that slight or repulse had turned her into his enemy. Meanwhile she was admitting Adhemar to private interviews at unsuspected hours, and taking swift measures for extending and strengthening the confederacy commenced by Rénaudie,

CHAP. II.

THIS eventful year now drew towards a close; and Clarence, after nearly twelve months' separation from his father, saw not any immediate prospect of their reunion. Whatever affections endeared the country of Aigline and Adhemar to him, those of a son fully counterbalanced them. His heart could ill brook the restraint imposed upon him of remaining aloof from the scene where his only parent was engaged so irksomely: and, perhaps, had he not been withheld by strong motives of gratitude, and interest in the anxieties of the Bourbon princes, he would have crossed the sea at once, deeming that prudence disgraceful which

warned him that such a step might ruin his fortunes irretrievably.

The return of Jean de Rénaudie from the English capital gave keener edge to these wishes. Rénaudie had visited Mr. Willoughby by Clarence's desire, and brought back some perplexing information.

By the advice of friends who deemed the course most likely to prove fortunate, Mr. Willoughby had consented to let the affair of his marriage, and his son's consequent rights, be examined privately before the queen, by such of her council as she chose to appoint for the investigation of so delicate a point. The de la Poles had agreed to the same mode of settling the dispute, building, perhaps, too confidently upon their acknowledged relationship to the queen, and the influence of their great wealth. Mr. Willoughby hoped to countervail these advantages by the success of his search after the friend that had witnessed his

marriage. The person himself was dead; but he had left a son, willing to testify upon oath his father's frequent repetition of all the circumstances necessary to establish the great facts of the case; and this gentleman came for that purpose from the island of Jersey, whither he had refuged during the persecutions of Mary and Philip. At first, the queen of England seemed inclined to admit this evidence; expressing herself well pleased with Mr. Willoughby's dutifulness and deference to her individual sense of justice, by referring the cause to her decision: but she suddenly suggested leaving what she called a decent veil over the private history of a noble family, and giving the younger Willoughby an indemnity either in place or land for his mother's fortune. This unlucky turn was said to have been produced by the indiscreet avowal of an attachment on the part of Plantagenet de la Pole, (Arthur's son,) to his cousin Rosamond

Dudley. He had made it with some spirit of honourable romance, when it seemed probable that she would be disinherited by her half-brother; and that had brought forward another suitor, who, being favoured by her guardian, Lord Robert, was publicly spoken of as her future husband. To gratify her favourite, Elizabeth consented, for this new suitor's sake, to negotiate a compromise with Mr. Willoughby. He listened to the person she sent to him, with trouble and incertitude: her offers increased in value; and the event of a complete refusal was easily guessed at. Bitterly did he now repent having engaged to submit to her decision. The expenses he had already incurred in prosecution of favour and evidence, and the length of time he had pursued both objects, rendered some immediate supply of money of high importance to him; and the fear of being eventually obliged to impair his moderate estate in Bearn, from the same cause, made the proposal

of bestowing upon Clarence an honourable and lucrative post at court, almost too tempting to be resisted.

Still, however, Mr. Willoughby declined compromising his son's honour,—for honour must have been compromised, had Clarence been satisfied to accept place and profit in lieu of a parent's good name — simply intreating permission for his son to cross into England, and there answer for himself.

Such a father could have no hesitation in imagining how his son would wish these proposals answered; but he fondly hoped that the prepossessing exterior of Clarence would work in his favour with one of Elizabeth's character, and he urged his suit for a gracious reply, respectfully but perseveringly. This was put off from day to day: and all that Mr. Willoughby could do was to write to his son, informing him of his painful predicament, and exhorting him to ask counsel of his noble patron, who, know-

ing by himself the pulse of princes, could best direct him in a difficulty like the present.

The prince, when consulted at Meaux, decidedly advised the bold step of crossing into England without waiting refusal or permission. Clarence must throw himself upon the mercy of the queen for pardon of his temerity, and abide the consequence: — she would be likely enough to attribute his coming, as much to impatience to behold her vaunted beauty, as to more obvious reasons; and if he could manage to reconcile truth with courtliness, in his address to her, it was probable that he might turn the scale as he wished.

Condé at first offered to make him the bearer of a letter, asking grace for him as a favour to himself: but suddenly turning upon Adhemar de Bourbon, whose breast was secretly labouring with a wish he had not courage to utter, enquired if he should dislike a few hours

in England; and being answered as he expected, proceeded to suggest a new plan.

His proposal was, that his nephew should accompany Clarence; and that, as it might be of consequence to the latter's success to keep such a thing from the knowledge of the De la Poles and the Dudleys, it would be requisite to take every step with the utmost secrecy and dispatch. They must travel incognito, without attendant of any kind: Adhemar's avowed object being the gallantry of complimenting Queen Elizabeth upon her happy settlement of the reformed religion in her dominions, and seizing that occasion of bringing to her feet a youthful professor of the same religion, as a suitor for her favour: — "Your real aim," Condé smilingly added, "must be to advance Willoughby's cause by every personal argument."

De Bourbon was too conscious of another object, to receive with an unchanged

countenance the instructions of his uncle, and the animated acknowledgments of his friend: but for that other object he would at first have joyfully proposed what he now acceded to. Renaudie had succeeded so partially with Elizabeth in his attempt to secure her promise of open resistance, if need were, to the efforts of the confederates, that Adhemar was meditating what other agent to employ in so important a work, when the present opportunity of visiting England himself, on an ostensible errand, all at once started up. He was ashamed to seize it: revolting from the imposition of seeming to act solely for his friend's interest, when he was, in fact, forwarding his own views. But he was bound to his party; and he was sworn to Catherine de Medicis.

With a vehemence unusual to him, he now rejected his friend's expressions of gratitude, enlarging upon his own curiosity to see England, and be enabled to make

some guess at the character of its maiden queen. He spoke of the haste and privacy of their expedition, as an additional motive from its very novelty; urging, in short, every thing in his power, to pacify his own self-humiliation, by disclaiming all merit towards his companion.

Clarence was but the more grateful: and Condé, unsuspicious of his nephew's deeper views on the English queen, bade him study her well, and see how far the French Protestants might rely upon her sincerity for good offices hereafter in any trying emergency.

To mask their real destination, it was agreed, that the Chevalier should order forward his ordinary train from Paris to Limoges, with the avowed purpose of joining them there, after his present brief visit to his uncle Condé should be ended: meanwhile he and Clarence should set off from Meaux with only one groom, whom they could easily rid themselves of by some errand back to Paris,

making their own way unattended to the coast.

The plan was scarcely arranged, ere it was executed. The friends rode post to Boulogne, where, embarking in a hired boat, under feigned names, reached the Kentish shore in safety; and proceeding with equal dispatch to London, arrived at the palace of Westminster late in the afternoon of a December day.

With what emotion Clarence found himself on British ground, and in the precincts of that palace where his royal ancestors had dwelt, may be imagined; he had scarcely leisure to ask himself why his cheek glowed so proudly, and his pulses beat so tumultuously. A confusion of natural feelings agitated him: England was the country of his parents — the country, where, if he were ever to have any place, he determined it should be a distinguished one: it was then the land of his present ambition and future action; and he felt as if in

breathing its air, he had realized his hopes, and given his rights validity.

With a freer step, perhaps, from the effect of this feeling, he followed his sedater friend to a quarter of the venerable building, where a billet, previously written by the latter, brought one of Elizabeth's gravest ministers to give the illustrious incognito welcome, and to conduct him to her presence.

The nephew of the Prince de Condé, that Adhemar de Bourbon of whom Elizabeth had heard so much and so nobly, was not likely to be an unsuccessful suitor for permission to congratulate her, upon the first and greatest event of her long reign — the establishment of that truly-christian Religion, which to this day is the boast and blessing of Englishmen. But Adhemar, when admitted into her presence, had other matters to discourse upon, as favourable to her policy as important in their consequences to himself; and so clearly

did he demonstrate the advantages of a closer connexion with the French Hugonots to counterpoise the designs of those in France and England, who were plotting to transfer the British crown to the brows of the queen of Scots, that Elizabeth, after long and silently pondering upon his various expositions, at length promised nearly all he asked. This included money for his party's service on their own ground; and a more vigorous war against Scotland, by way of drawing the French king's forces out of his country. These were promised in full confidence that the Prince de Condé, or king of Navarre, would eventually lead the malcontents; but as Adhemar warned her that neither might be gained to the confederates, she did not retract her royal word — refusing only to give him any pledge in writing, for the satisfaction of his coadjutors.

Emboldened by success on this subject, the Chevalier, with a mixture of gallant apprehensiveness and noble con-

fidence, named his companion; intreating pardon for the temerity of them both, and insinuating a compliment, which Elizabeth's sex, youth, and agreeable person, the manners of that period divested of flattery.

Elizabeth for some time affected displeasure at the youth's boldness; but at length allowed herself to be so far wrought on, as to admit him into her presence for a rebuke.

Clarence, who was awaiting this moment in solitude and impatience, entered with just as much agitation of spirit as gave a becoming heightening to his complexion; and which somewhat checking the impetuosity of his ordinary manner, imparted to it that sort of interest which is excited by witnessing the struggling submission of a young and fiery courser.

As he dropt upon one knee on entering, the queen eyed him at that distance with evident pleasure. The character his open brow expressed, was indeed,

little like that of the subtle and accomplished person who was then mastering her affections, but it resembled her after favourite's, the gallant and misguided Essex; and it was, therefore, formed to please her.

After sharply reprimanding him for daring to set foot on English ground until licensed by her permission, she professed to pardon him solely through consideration of his princely protector; questioned him upon some abstruse points of their religion, which, she said, was his first advocate with her in a cause that aggrieved her nearest relatives; and concluded by taking it for granted, that he came over solely to accept her offered grace of an indemnity for his pretensions.

At this offensive repetition of a proposal which Clarence's fiery spirit deemed disgraceful to him, he half-started up, but as instantly dropt on his knee again, urging in a voice, whose indignant tone

he could with difficulty controul, so many right feelings and honourable sentiments, rather than presumptuous arguments in opposition, that the queen, still better pleased with him, though smothering all expression of it, condescended to say she would take the matter further into consideration: meanwhile, as she did not choose her court to be a scene of brawl and contention, he must be content to remain abroad until the affair were settled; unless he were prepared to refrain from quartering his mother's arms with those of his father. Adding, that she had refused to meddle with his conduct in that particular, while he abode in France, purely out of complaisance to his noble patron, not at all as an admission of his right to do so.

Elizabeth's words were anstere, but her looks were gracious; and as she gave him her hand to kiss, while dismissing him with a charge to keep the honour of this audience secret from all, save his

father, Clarence felt joyful assurance that she might now procrastinate, but would not finally disappoint.

Leaving his friend to sup privately with the queen, and those in her confidence, he hastened with redoubled impatience to seek his father.

Clarence was not acquainted with the capital of his country, yet he could not fail noting, that the house he was directed to stood remote from the court; consequently, must be in an obscure part of the city. On reaching it, the door was opened by the single servant that had accompanied Mr. Willoughby from Bearn. He did not recognise his young master's person in the dusk of evening, nor catch the peculiar sound of his voice, from the low and muffled tone in which Clarence spoke; but as he turned with him into a side room, and whispered in more familiar accents his name, and a caution against surprize, the affectionate domestic uttered an exclamation of joy.

Impatient as Clarence was to see his father, he hastily informed himself that he was within; then anxiously questioned Basil concerning his health, spirits, and circumstances. Basil knew no reason for concealment with his master's son, and he explained at once the reason of their residence in such humble lodgings; stating the expences consequent upon the business in hand, and showing how the revenue of L'étoile, left without tenant, and its produce not exportable for their use, must be insufficient for such purposes; when applied, also, to the handsome maintenance of a young gentleman at the court of Paris.

It was, however, only doing justice to the present accupant of Mr. Willoughby's paternal house, to add, that he had kindly urged his kinsman to go and take up his abode with him; but as that step would remove Mr. Willoughby from the due prosecution of his business with those who went between him and her

majesty, he had preferred silently struggling with his own straitened means, to such an accommodation.

Basil had no intention to reproach his young master, when he alluded to his expenses in the French capital. These seemed to him as absolutely indispensable, as those which were caused Mr. Willoughby, by the customary fees and presents in London: and he would just as soon have admitted the propriety of his old master going without a dinner, as that his young one should have appeared among peers and princes without a cloak of the newest cut, and a jewel set in the latest fashion.

But while he spoke of the father's and son's different demands for money, with equal concern for the wants of both, he was unawares opening Clarence's eyes to a fault, of which, till now, he had been unconscious. He had never sufficiently calculated the income of his father, nor considered his unavoidable calls for it in

the prosecution of their joint rights. His own expenditure of money he had rather regulated by the principle of not spending it in vicious or selfish indulgence, than by that of just prudence. He could not, indeed, reproach himself with having wasted more of it than was natural to inconsiderate, generous youth, living familiarly with the rich and noble: but he did reproach himself; and while Basil continued speaking, unconsciously sat down, as if he had no further object to seek. Bitter self-condemnation was in his heart: and long after Basil had ceased to speak, he remained in a sort of stupor. The servant stood for awhile in patient waiting by his side, and at length ventured to ask if he had forgotten that he said his master was alone, and above stairs?

"No, good Basil, I have not forgotten!" Clarence answered, rising deliberately from his seat, and fetching a deep sigh: with that sigh was coupled

purposes and resolutions which honoured him; — but he gave them not utterance: after another pause, he raised his head, and clearing his brow, that he might not chill the joy of his father, bade Basil lead the way.

Almost the next moment he was in his father's arms!

Mr. Willoughby's amazement and joy at first, and the alarm which seized him almost immediately afterwards, were expressed with more than his ordinary tenderness. The mere sight of the only object of his life, this cherished son, was unmanning to him, especially in scenes associated with the dreams of his own youth — Love and Happiness! — but to find himself pressed against that son's breast with a strength, and a throng of smothered sighs, evidencing some extraordinary cause of emotion, naturally created apprehensions, which perhaps, fortunately balanced the overpowering transport of such a re-union.

Clarence was not slow of explaining his present extreme agitation. In broken exclamations upon the wretched place which he chose to say he found his father in, he accused himself of shamefully squandering unnecessary sums upon worthless objects and pleasures, while the honoured source of such indulgence was denying himself common comforts, and living in cheerless obscurity.

"Precipitate as ever, Clarence!" exclaimed Mr. Willoughby, smiling kindly, "judging at once upon the evidence of a servant! a class of persons always given to exaggeration, whether in their affection or ill-will. I have only not allowed myself vanities, — not caring for them at my age — nor would they be becoming in my situation here; and you and Basil decide that I have denied myself comforts. Look round at my sea-coal fire, my warm stuff hangings, — nay, on that table set out for my supper with a fair manchet and a good cup of Canary, and

then tell me whether a reasonable man, and a father, could want any thing in addition, except — what I hold here?"

At this affectionate conclusion, Mr. Willoughby and his son clasped each other more tightly; their long and silent embrace was plentifully watered with tears; and it was eloquent to both, of comfort and confidence. When Clarence arose from it, he looked round the apartment and upon the table, where he did, indeed, observe the signs of moderate enjoyment which his father bade him note: but on the table he saw, also, that *precious volume* which teaches moderation, and invites to it by the promise of abundant and nobler joys in the life to come.

Clarence's late studies with Adhemar de Bourbon had made him better acquainted with the sacred book than he had been in his boyish days, and he pressed his father's hand as he now fixed his eyes on it, with an expressive smile.

His heart was full, with a variety of feelings and comparisons; and taking refuge in employment, however trivial, began to disencumber himself of his travelling cloak and slouched beaver.

Mr. Willoughby regarded his face and figure, when thus perfectly displayed, with parental pride; and the ambition he had never felt for himself, while boasting equal advantages, began to rise in his bosom for this noble-looking son. He anxiously questioned him upon the ground of his visit to England, dreading the truth, that he had hazarded it without permission from their sovereign. This momentary alarm gave place to satisfaction and hope, when he was told the circumstances, and the success of Clarence's private introduction into the presence of the queen: of course, after that, every subject connected with the future destiny of his son, was entered upon by Mr. Willoughby.

He detailed the progress of his great object in England; avoiding, as was his

custom, all mention of his own privations and mortifications in the furtherance of it. Solicitous chiefly to obtain his son's approval of what he had already done, and receive instructions from him for his future conduct.

Mr. Willoughby feared he had done wrong in consenting to the queen's private decision of his son's claims; and Clarence might have owned he thought so too, had he not hoped the mischief was already repaired in part, by the favourable impression he had just made upon his judge. He, therefore, waived the question; stifled the expression of his aversion to every way of seeking a birth-right, except by the established one of impartial law, and tried to animate his father by the prospect of ultimate success.

Mr. Willoughby's management of so delicate and intricate a business, had not been equalled in ability, by its earnestness and good intention. Every thing

that could be promoted by ungrudging self-denial, by the sacrifice of favourite habits, and the endurance of impertinence or insolence, was done and suffered by him: but he had never been a proficient in the ways of the world, when he mixed most with it: and his modesty was, therefore, susceptible of intimidation; his diffidence easily taught to distrust his best judgments; and his reliance on promises, notorious, to a degree that placed him at the mercy of every procrastinator.

Clarence could not help drawing conclusions something to this effect, from his father's narrative, while he was relating different passages of his conduct, and stating their motives; but he forbore to blame him; refusing himself even a secret wish that his character had "more pith and power." Parental love was evident in every act and intention, and with that, what son is not to be satisfied? Clarence regretted only that he could not

take his father's place in the irksome employment by which already twelve months had been fruitlessly consumed: but as that could not be, and as Mr. Willoughby must remain in England till the business were terminated, his son (determining to re-model his own mode of life when he got back to France) seriously, discussed a plan for raising money directly at L'étoile, by leasing out certain productive osier-grounds and a fishery belonging to the estate on its lower lands, for a specific sum, payable at once.

This being reluctantly acceded to by Mr. Willoughby, loth to lower so the value of a property which might eventually be all his son was to possess, the next point was to determine what conditions his father might accept for him in the affair of his pretensions. Clarence was resolute to make no compromise of his rights; although, when once adjudged to him, he would be willing to bestow part as a free gift upon his half-sister.

If he must either consent to live with a disputed name and rank even in the sunshine of royal favour, by accepting the late proposal — or have his cause lingered over by the queen until he or she dropt into the grave, — so the latter must be: he would never, he said, enter into an agreement for his own degradation. But if her majesty would allow his claims a fair examination, he could trust to the justice of an English council's hearts, since he was not to be judged by the ordinary law-court — and if the sentence pronounced his parents' marriage valid, awarding him, consequently, the fortune of his mother, and the reversion of that which his father had made over during life to his cousin, he would bind himself by any instrument the queen saw good, to transfer the contested dowry to his sister Rosamond Dudley, and content himself with a soldier's fortune in her majesty's service.

Whether this offer would be thought

sufficient for the destined husband, and the present powerful guardian of Rosamond, events must determine: meanwhile Mr. Willoughby ventured to hope much from the graciousness of the queen, and from the opportunity now allowed the Chevalier de Bourbon of promoting his friend's views, by earnest representation of his merits.

When it became Clarence's turn to question, he learnt, with a slight movement of resentment, that Arthur de la Pole, affecting scorn of Mr. Willoughby's pretension to alliance with his family, — hoping to smother its facts in the convenient obscurity of a private and arbitrary decision in the queen's closet — had haughtily kept aloof, and commanded, or influenced his son to do the same, from any intercourse with the former associate of his younger days: — but nothing had arisen to testify any peculiar enmity, or base contrivance on his part. He seemed too proudly secure, for much activity, or

more dangerous artifice. Mr. Willoughby knew only from men in office, that the amorous rivalry between Plantagenet de la Pole, and a son of the Lord Grey, had so opposed the influence of Elizabeth's insinuating favourite and her imperious kinsman, that the affair was nearly at a stand. If, however, the young Rosamond were to be the prize of Grey, he might be contented with her fortune as a gift from Clarence: but if De la Pole were successful, his honour as a kinsman, and his zeal as a Catholic, would make the question of her mother's illegal marriage too important a matter to be so easily adjusted. There was, however, a rumour afloat that he had been utterly rejected, and was gone beyond seas in despair; and with this rumour Mr. Willoughby satisfied himself.

Clarence made one or two efforts to discover what degree of emotion had been awakened in his father, upon revisiting the scene of his earliest and

dearest impressions; but checked in this natural curiosity by Mr. Willoughby's habitual disinclination to intrude his private feelings, after a moment's hesitation, he ventured to ask, if any chance had given him a sight of Rosamond Dudley. Rosamond was Clarence's sister; and, in the country of their mother, this relationship pressed upon him with a force that surprised himself: perhaps he felt it the more powerfully, from a generous regret at coming there to dispute rights with her. Mr. Willoughby answered in the negative, stifling a sigh as he did so: their conversation then turned upon their mutual friends at Roche Blanc.

Here Clarence was eloquent — the smallest detail of village annals was interesting to one that kindly regarded every inhabitant of the place where he had spent his most placid years; and Clarence, glad to seize the present opportunity of obtaining his father's sanction to his affection for Aigline, frankly

described the new feelings her developed beauty and ripening character had excited in him during his last visits to L'étoile. Mr. Willoughby loved, esteemed, compassionated Aigline; but he had lately accustomed himself to imagine every variety of exalted fortune and happiness for his son; he was not prepared, therefore, to abate all at once the weighty advantages of wealth and great connexions in a wife for him.

Clarence noted his father's hesitation, with the surprize of generous youth blessedly unskilled in worldly wisdom; and when Mr. Willoughby urged his reasonable objections to an engagement between persons so young, and so situated, his son answered him with more warmth than might have been expected after his late self-condemning feelings. Clarence, however, was rarely thus intemperate beyond the moment: he repented and retracted his hasty disturbance; repeating, in a more submissive and per-

suasive tone, such arguments for cherishing this early attachment as did honour to his heart, and gradually won his father back to the original sentiments of his.

Aigline, well born, — just as much his inferior in years and acquirements as might become a woman; familiar, from infancy, with his peculiarities of thought and habits; tenderly devoted to the study of his tastes and wishes; and fondly duteous to his father, — was in herself, assuredly, every thing a parent could desire for his son: that she was portionless, not happy at home, and likely, if left in singleness, to experience only a life of care and domestic slavery, were surely additional motives to animate the purposes of a generous affection. Clarence, unlike the lovers of modern days, felt these circumstances bind her closer to his heart; and joyfully ready to give up more ambitious views, knew that he would be doubly blessed in blessing her. He besought his father to sanctify the wishes

he could not conquer, yet would not fully explain to their object, without his approval. Mr. Willoughby so called upon, and inwardly moved by a grateful and tender regard for the young creature who had neglected many a girlish pleasure for the sake of cheering his solitary hours, hesitated how to answer; then taking a middle course, besought his son to sound his heart thoroughly, ere he rashly engaged her affections and pledged his own faith.

"You are young, my son," he said, drawing a troubled sigh; "and, in more prosperous or proud circumstances, you may live to repent the hasty bond. If your mother had been quite satisfied with ours, after she was of ripe age, would she, do you think —"

Mr. Willoughby did not finish the question; and Clarence, noting the quivering of his lip, thought it best not to ask it. He looked down; but not from consideration of himself. "I might repent," he

replied, "of the sacred bond were it to be formed with some acquaintance of an hour; but Aigline, loved unconsciously from our childhood, is twined with every dear recollection — knit up with all in me that is worth your or her loving: tear out her image, and I fear my best qualities must go along with it. No, my father, I cannot repent — I have had good experience of my heart: when I went from Roche Blanc, in honest truth it was with many a boy's vision of marvellous passion for some peerless beauty whom I looked to find in the world. Twenty times, when at Paris, did I fancy this fated charmer found; and as many times did her insipidity or good-for-nothingness, or my own soberer feeling, undeceive me. I returned home; and besides the dear delightful sensation belonging to the revival of old feelings, I found Aigline's countenance, Aigline's manner, Aigline's affection, give me a transport they had never done hitherto.

I quit her, uncertain of the extent of her regard for me; I go back amongst the glittering personages of the Parisian court, and I feel then, more than ever, that I love her — love her exclusively — love her for life. Have I not a right, therefore, dear father, to believe my senments well-grounded and unchangeable?"

"You have a sort of right, certainly," returned Mr. Willoughby;—"so I do not bid you quench the generous impulse of your soul; only be discreet,—hurry nothing. Remember, as yet, you have neither a home to invite her to, nor a name to give her."

"And if she would not take me without either," exclaimed Clarence, crimsoning almost with a happy lover's consciousness, "by this hand, she should never have the power of accepting or refusing me! I mistake the pride of my heart most villainously, if it would be contented with any thing short of devotedness in return for its own."

"Call it delicacy, Clarence," observed Mr. Willoughby, correcting the phrase, yet thinking the proud feeling his son avowed, did not misbecome him; "but I doubt, if you would not be contented with less; provided you loved truly and could obtain no more. However, I am tranquil enough in that particular, and I trust you to your own guidance. Now you know my wishes; only bear in mind, that if your affection has been sifted by the world, Aigline may be yet ignorant of her own tastes. Roche Blanc may be compared to a desert island, and you the only man on it: when she has been out of that, and seen others, her preference may be received and relied on."

Clarence was struck with this remark, and it made him silent: at that moment, the bell of a neighbouring church reminded him of the flight of time and an appointment he had made to meet the Chevalier at a hostelry in the suburbs, where they had left their horses. So

much secresy and dispatch had originally been put into their journey by the two travellers, and so much more of the first was now commanded by Queen Elizabeth, that Adhemar de Bourbon thought it best to send only a message of gracious import to Mr. Willoughby, without attempting to see him; and Mr. Willoughby was so aware of the propriety of this, and so well pleased to have one unreserved discourse with his son, that he scarcely regretted the loss of an opportunity for expressing the gratitude he felt.

The meeting of father and son had indeed been most pleasurable: Clarence's natural buoyancy of spirit quickly rose above the pain of first feelings; and although many subjects were discussed between them, which unavoidably gave seriousness, nay, sometimes sadness to his manner, there were others upon which his lively light of character threw its brightest, most playful beam.

Mr. Willoughby's heart, long estranged

from such pleasure, warmed with it again; and as he listened to his son's cheerful tones, and looked upon his animating countenance, he told him, with something of his own pleasantry, that he seemed to see the woods of dear L'étoile in his face, and hear the accents of familiar friends in every sound of his voice. Yet in spite of so many selfish reasons for wishing his visit prolonged, this considerate parent, the moment he heard his son's time had been allotted, sought not to detain him.

Clarence, however, lingered, to inform himself of his father's present provision for his comfort; to make him particularize the few associates of early life, that cheered his otherwise lonely evenings; to beseech him again and again not to deny himself the indulgences requisite at his age; and with many an affectionate embrace to peruse his honoured countenance, anxiously noting what alteration so long a period of unwonted action and

agitation had made in those gently-marked lineaments.

Mr. Willoughby smiled more than once at this earnest searching of his looks. "Go in peace, foolish boy!" he said cheerfully: "you have found me well, and you will leave me better; for the sight of you, and the news you have brought, have refreshed me. — Go, go, in God's name."

Clarence's brightening feelings re-expanded with this cheerfulness; he gave his father another fervent embrace, with only a smothered "God bless you!" and hurrying down stairs, beckoned Basil to follow him into the street. As they walked along, he renewed his lesson of secresy, assuring Basil that his master's future success depended upon it: adding to this many injunctions concerning care of his father; and giving the honest domestic the only valuable he had about him, a ring of some price bestowed on him by the Princess of Condé,

charged him to add whatever money he could raise by its sale to the fund of his master's respectable support, and kindly squeezing his hand, while pressing into it a bit of gold, dismissed him at the door of the house where he had promised to await the Chevalier.

De Bourbon, more anxious than he for departure, was already there: horses, previously saddled by his orders, were led out of the stable on Clarence's appearance.—The friends mounted; and passing but for ordinary messengers from the ambassador in France, took the road again to Dover.

A bright night, and frosty morning, favoured their journey: on making the coast, they found the wind fair and not dangerously strong; embarking therefore, in an open boat with two experienced fishermen, they were landed a little above Boulogne, which they sought not to enter. Walking forward to a village further inland, where money pro-

cured them a couple of farming horses, necessary to carry them on towards better ones, they reached Paris exactly five days after having quitted Meaux. No one there, either knew or suspected where they had been, concluding them with the Prince de Condé at his chateau; and the train of Adhemar de Bourbon having been sent forward to Limoges, were equally ignorant on the important subject.

CHAP. III.

When the friends arrived in the capital, they found the court just removing to the pure air of Blois, by order of the king's physicians. Certain outward indications of a corrupt state of the bodily humours were fast increasing upon the face and person of the indolent Francis; and although these were not said to threaten life, the Guises were too much interested in the preservation of one under whose name they ruled, not to take the most active measures for the restoration of his health. The same circumstance stimulated the queen-mother to greater activity and hazard in the prosecution of her secret object. The death of Francis

might cause a revolution in the minds of many of the Catholic confederates, and unsettle the purposes of the Hugonot ones, placing her wholly at the mercy of the young queen and her family. If Francis were to leave his consort in a condition which promised an heir to his crown (and the Guises caused this idea to be circulated), Catherine de Medicis would at once become a cypher. The mother of the future sovereign, and the kindred of that mother, would naturally preponderate in the state, both before and after its birth; and although it was just possible that one of the Bourbons might be forced upon the triumvirate by the authority of the people at large, there was no such prospect for the dowager queen. It became her best policy, therefore, to quicken the exertions and secure the fidelity of Adhemar de Bourbon; and as his hopes of the legitimacy must infallibly fail, were the king to die under the circumstances just mentioned she thought

to forward her own views by opening to him some fresh ground of hope.

On his return from England she saw him as usual, in private; and after listening to all he had to relate of his unsuspected interview with the English queen, she scrupled not to exaggerate almost to actual invention, parts of a conversation she had held incidentally with her son.

This purported, that the youthful sovereign, complaining of the restraint in which his will was held by the haughty Duke de Guise, more than hinted his willingness to admit the Viscount de Limoges to a participation of honour with the lawful princes of his house, provided certain rumours could be substantiated or rendered plausible, which had formerly whispered that a private marriage had actually taken place between Adhemar de Bourbon's parents.

The dowager queen reminded the Chevalier, that his father's closest friend, the

Vidame de Chartres, though shy of the court, was still a firm adherent of the Bourbon race; that he was to be found in the south of France; and that he might probably be able to report certain confidences of his friend which might establish the supposed fact, that a contract at least, had passed between the young prince and Ma'mselle de Briqnemart. In the south too, a sister of M'amselle de Briqnemart's was yet living, and from her Adhemar might derive fresh means of satisfactorily proving that it was his father's intention to have made the unhappy lady his wife in defiance of every threatened punishment ere she had given birth to the living witness of their transgression, had not her premature pains and consequent death, while he was employed on service, frustrated the repentant purpose.

To the south, therefore, Catherine advised Adhemar to go, without loss of time, during the removal of the court,

for this especial object; while seizing the same opportunity of tampering with some of the most powerful Hugonots there, and influencing them to assist in the organization of secret levies. By giving Adhemar's troubled spirit the first great object, she was certain of perplexing and bewildering it more than ever; thus distracting him from the question he recurred to again and again, the lawfulness or culpability of concealing their joint secret not only from his uncle Condé, but from Rénaudie; and allowing herself time to look round and see what course were best for herself to follow eventually: whether to continue moving this one victim by unseen springs, herself unseen — or at once come forward boldly, to direct others and claim the highest reward of successful enterprize — or fall off to the opposite party, and make her own terms for the betrayal of a plot, that might otherwise destroy the monarchy with the ministers.

Dissembling all these considerations, Catherine, to whom the Chevalier's journey to England had afforded a most welcome surprize, grounded her present advice upon the details of this journey. As Elizabeth evinced peculiar hesitation in making any compact with a confederacy which did not involve all the first nobles amongst the Hugonots and the discontented Catholics, Catherine could better urge the necessity for Adhemar's personal efforts to draw on the greatest men in the provinces, while she put all her instruments to work in the capital and about the court, to combine the power of her adherents with those of the Bourbon princes. Not as if to prove his sincerity, but merely as if to express her zeal in the cause, she placed in Adhemar's hands some of her most valuable jewels, for distribution by their able agent in foreign courts; who was trying there to beg or buy assistance, in case resistance were successfully attempted

by the corrupt government, or invasion effected by Spain. This support and that of money was, in truth, all that was wanting to the confederates; their numbers were swelling every day, increasing in proportion to the wanton aggressions of those in power. The prime mover, the otherwise obscure Jean de Rénaudie, was now passing through different states in Germany for this express purpose: hitherto, he alone had appeared upon the scene either at home or abroad; he, alone, had infused resentment, and prompted resistance. The Guises, who had their eyes solely fixed upon the Bourbon princes, and could discover no secret meetings in their houses, nor trace them to any unknown haunts, nor intercept any suspicious correspondence between them, were thus lulled into security; — the queen-mother, by her occasional remarks, was enabled to flatter this preposterous confidence of theirs, even while affecting something of indifference to

public concerns; and Rénaudie, therefore, prosecuted his deep-laid plans with equal fearlessness and celerity.

Using the name of a Bourbon sparingly, but ever at the right moment, this able partizan left the persons he gained over to fix upon the idea of Condé or the Chevalier, as their individual affections prompted; both had so many admirers, that it was scarcely possible to say which was likely to make the greatest number of proselytes; and of the efficient arm of one, he was, in fact, assured. Catherine was not perfectly easy on the subject of his personal views — these might be more ambitious than Adhemar de Bourbon suspected. It was, therefore, necessary to keep them in check, by giving him a counterpoise in men of riper age, cooler judgments, and of greater ostensible authority than the young warrior; and for this purpose she now urged the latter to take some of the active duty upon himself, admitting such persons as she pointed

out into their scheme. Elizabeth of England had adroitly managed to give the amplest approval to the objects of the confederacy, and express the highest regard for the principal person concerned in it, without committing herself by any written pledge whatever, or any discourse before a witness, or even by the admission of her ambassador into the councils of the confederate Hugonots — she had singly presented the Chevalier with the means of raising a certain sum of money for the relief, as she termed it, of the suffering Protestants; and had distinctly intimated to him, that at the proper moment her aid would not be withheld. Catherine de Medicis, therefore, saw that she had her full match in far-reaching policy, in this prudent princess; and she rejoiced, consequently, that Adhemar de Bourbon had so faithfully preserved the secret of their unsuspected compact.

While discussions like these detained

his friend in Paris, Clarence took not breath until he had gone to Meaux, and communicated to the prince there the evident success of the temerity he had counselled. Such was the joy of his sanguine and affectionate nature, so full was his heart of his sovereign's graciousness and his father's tenderness; so overflowing with gratitude both to the adviser and the companion of his journey, that even while he protested words were wanting to express all he felt on the occasion, he talked so fluently and rapturously, that his noble auditor thought fit to warn him against possible indiscretion in consequence.

Entering most fully into his hopes, the prince damped them not by a single apprehensive phrase; but he bade him remember that the frailty of a moment might undo all the good he was now rejoicing at having effected; and that as a grateful spirit was often as indiscreet as a vain one, unless he moderated these

expressions of his, nay, confined them after the present burst to his own bosom, the queen of England might suppose her favor boasted of, and there must be plenty of expectants about her, ready enough to seize such an opportunity for ruining him at his outset.

Clarence pleaded guilty to the implied charge of unguardedness in his ordinary intercourse with society; but venturing to say he could conceal both his humour and his actions when it was actually right to do so, had no hesitation in promising extreme caution upon the present occasion.

Condé jested with himself for thus warning one, not more open and careless than he was considered in all his communications; "but," he added, gaily, "none speak with such *unction* upon the evil of a fault, as those that have suffered from it in their own persons." He then proceeded to question Clarence more particularly upon the English queen's

manner and address to the Chevalier, amusing himself with his replies; and vowing, that whenever he wore a crown, he would choose his ambassadors out of men like his nephew and his young equerry.

He next instructed him to avoid all assiduity, beyond what he had hitherto shown to Elizabeth's representative at the French court, as it was not likely to pass unobserved by the Catholic correspondents of the De la Poles; and their suspicions might be roused by it into more active hostility: repeating his confidence in every thing turning out fortunate at last, he commissioned Clarence to tell his nephew that he thought his caution of not accompanying his friend to Meaux overstrained; and wishing him a pleasant settlement of the business which the latter said demanded him in Bearn, the prince dismissed him with his usual kindness.

Clarence returned not to Paris: he

was impatient to end those self-reproaches which tormented him for having so long neglected to reflect upon every subject connected with his future character in life: a duty imperative upon us all, when we voluntarily quit the sheltering wing, and launch ourselves singly, amid the conflicting elements of the world and our own passions. It is true, his lavish expenditure had taken a timely check from Mr. Willoughby's first gentle representation of the inconvenience which might attend its continuance: but Clarence had certainly not considered the matter with sufficient attention; since he had only ceased to spend with the profuse, never thinking that the sums he believed appropriated to his father's subsistence, were, in reality, swallowed up by the gulph of their precarious suit.

Happily for our hero's peace of mind, the true state of things came to his knowledge time enough to admit of reparation:

the personal sacrifices he meditated, and the dispositions he was empowered to make of the L'étoile property, would amply supply present wants; and, as he now joyously calculated upon a speedy settlement of his disputed rights, and looked forward to some honourable post near the person of his sovereign, he believed his father's unusual demand for money would not be extended until it seriously injured his foreign estate.

Thus, with business in his head, and love in his heart, — for Clarence thought of Aigline and all he was privileged to plead to her, with throbbing pulses — he contemplated short separation from his friend without much disturbance. It had been previously agreed by the Chevalier and him, that they should not continue together: ordinary custom made it right for the former to visit his own province, and receive there the neighbouring nobility and gentry, as he was

wont. It was incumbent on him, also, to examine into the truth of many complaints which were preferred there of arbitrary interference on the part of government minions, when the indulgent conduct of his people, to persons accused or suspected of political discontent, excited their malicious activity.

To this commendable and avowed motive, others had been added by Catherine de Medicis since Clarence and he parted; and although the Chevalier yielded to the necessity of concealing some of them from his friend, that which was connected with the hoarded desire of his soul he would not be restrained from confessing. In a letter to Clarence, wherein he informed him that he was expected to show the king the respect of accompanying the court to Blois, and remaining there till the effect of that fine air were ascertained, he described the agitating hopes which had been awakened in him by a friend mentioning an opinion,

(current, he now found at the time of his mother's death, and the concealment of which he should ever resent at the hands of his father's kindred,) which, if true, would justify him in asking as a right, what he had hitherto been contented to seek as the dearest grace. He then named the persons whom he meant to see and question on the business; particularly naming the Vidame of Chartres, to whom he had already dispatched an invitation to meet him, under pretence of a week's hunting at Limoges.

This letter ended with an affectionate comparison between his own strange destiny and that of his friend, praying that they might prove equally fortunate, at least so far as honour was concerned. The last expression ran thus: —

"If I might indulge selfishness, unreproved by better judgment, I would say, O that we had been born of the same parents! then would our thoughts have been twin, as our hearts are now.

But as it is, Willoughby, I must devour some of my moodiest fancies separate, since you belong to another country and to your father."

While reading this passage, Clarence could only imagine that it referred to their unavoidable separation when he should be summoned happily to England: he guessed not that a keener feeling prompted it; and that the moody fancies his friend described were such as haunted him with fearful warnings, in despite of his confidence in the queen-mother's sincerity; of his chafed humour against his uncles; of his assurance that the cause he had embarked his life in was just; and of his conviction that the concealment of these dangerous views from the friend whose fortunes lay in another kingdom, was rather a virtue than a sin.

As Clarence dwelt on this dark complexioned passage, he sighed; and felt, for the moment, fearful sympathy with

its gloominess: but cheering ideas rose in him, and he said to himself, "at the worst, only a slip of sea will divide us; and true hearts can meet, when the bodies they belong to are forced to abide away;" and with this thought he consoled himself. His happy nature was, indeed, less dependant than Adhemar's melancholy one, for the aliment of its affection and the delight of life: when removed from his friend, he could contemplate his early fame and present qualities, with as much admiration as when beside him; and find nearly equal pleasure in describing the interestingness of his conversation, as in listening to it himself.

But Adhemar, when deprived of Clarence, unaccustomed to solace himself by so painting the image he delighted in, and seeing it admired by others, found himself amongst crowds in the solitude of the heart: at every moment he missed his familiar companion's unreserved con-

fidence, the glow of his unfaded feelings, the light of his joyous temper, and the charm peculiar to his manner. It is not wonderful that he should, therefore, contemplate his removal to England with an excess of regret; and that in his present restless, dissatisfied state of mind, he should vainly pine for the satisfaction of showing his heart completely to the only person by whom he was assured all its inconsistent wishes and purposes would be seen with partial indulgence. The five days Clarence and he had passed wholly together with such interesting objects in view, so happily attained; the very enthusiasm of Clarence's gratitude to him, had given fresh vivacity both to Adhemar's delight in his society, and to his trust in his stability: he was, consequently, ill inclined to separate from him for the sole purpose of pursuing schemes in which he was not to participate. However, to this necessity he was bound by his engagements with Rénaudie and

the queen-mother; and it was not the least of the Chevalier's regrets that he had ever embarked singly on a sea of difficulties which he did not find himself strong enough to encounter without either the guardian of his childhood, or the dear companion of his riper age.

Although Clarence quitted Meaux in the full glow of hope upon every point interesting to his heart, no answering joyfulness awaited him amongst his Pyrrenean friends. He found the family of Baron de Roche Blanc established at their own chateau: but such an air of disorder and discordance in the Baron's stile of living, as clearly convinced him that his expenses had already outrun his means. Lolótte was still in exile; the suit in her behalf drawing to a conclusion, and that unfavourably; Madame de Roche Blanc was confined wholly to her sofa in her dressing-room; Cecile become more petulant and peevish than

ever; and Aigline, harassed between the discordant duties of watching a dying parent in one chamber, and doing the honours to her step-father's visitors in another.

When Clarence first met Aigline, he was painfully struck by the alteration which five months had made in her; she was thin and wan: he had been watching for the well-remembered sound of her slight foot, as different persons advanced towards the parlour, where he was introduced on reaching the chateau: but the light step was gone with the light heart; and he did not distinguish hers while she approached along a passage, unconscious of his arrival. She entered with the lingering tread and thoughtful paleness now habitual to her; yet on seeing him her rayless countenance at once lighted up with such brightness of bloom and joy, that Clarence almost blessed every previous circumstance which could thus demonstrate

his power of reviving the soul of Aigline.

So delightful a surprize as she now experienced, deprived her of utterance; so that the only welcome he obtained from her was given by her speaking eyes, and trembling hand, as she returned the pressure of his. Luckily, so many persons were in the room, and the Baron so busy with them all, that the mutual emotion of these early friends escaped observation. They were, besides, enabled to ask and answer questions without offensively lowering their voices; and in this way Clarence heard enough of the family history since they parted, to account for the change in Aigline's appearance. Much as this change pained him, while he saw the fluctuating colour of her cheeks gradually settle into its former rich damask, and her whole aspect recover its wonted animation, he felt that a few hours' happiness would at any time repay that sensitive heart for months of

wasting care; and he thought, with livelier transport, of the different home his father and himself would joy to make for her.

Opportunities for offering her such a home he made sure of soon obtaining, from the desultory habits of her family in its present disjointed state, and from the desire he naturally reckoned upon in the companion of his earliest days to talk with him apart of the banished Lolótte; but he was disappointed. Aigline was afraid of her own resolution; and after the first joyful forgetfulness, remembered that she must not trust herself, intentionally, in his single society. She had also so many calls upon her time from her mother's rapid decay, and her sister's less obvious one, that she was no longer to be found amongst her sheltered and favourite plants in the conservatory: and when she appeared in her mother's place at table, or in her stepfather's evening circle, her necessary

attentions to the guests limited Clarence's share in her to little beyond an occasional interchange of cordial glances, or a more familiar mode of rendering ordinary civilities to each other than was ventured by others.

At first, Clarence's impatient and fervid spirit was irritated by this delay of his hopes, to absolute vexation; a thing very rare with him: but in a day or two he cheered again; satisfied that accident was solely to blame, and delighting himself with the idea that his father could no longer talk of Roche Blanc as a desert island, nor imagine Aigline incapable of making an election between his son and numberless men of different ages, endowments, and conditions. Not a few of the strangers whom the Baron allured to his house, by a species of false fame, evidently admired Aigline sufficiently to become his serious rivals, upon the slightest encouragement: but, without overlooking them, or even underrating

the qualities of such as deserved consideration, she managed neither to raise their hopes, nor excite more than momentary jealousy in the breast of her observing lover. Clarence, meanwhile, was himself the object of an attention which rather teazed than flattered him, and often broke in upon his views of a private conversation with Aigline.

The St. Maurs, revived by the sight of a face familiar at Paris, and associated with the memory of former consequence, no sooner heard of Clarence Willoughby's arrival at L'étoile, than they called forth all their half-wearied powers of pleasing. Victor was absent; but his father was well qualified to supply his place, when family interest was in question: and Aurelie, from whose memory the fascinations of her former favourite had conveniently faded upon the serious approach of a provincial admirer, with the same facility of heart, all at once discovered that love was an essential ingredient in

her matrimonial cup, and acted accordingly. Her father knew well, that any agreeable man with the air of the court in his countenance, and fortune or favour in his possession, was certain of persuading her that her happiness depended upon him: but he was too well-bred to tell her so; and reckoning that the young Englishman's chance for both these goods was worth scrutinizing, he made such frequent visits to L'étoile, and managed questions so dexterously, that he quickly learnt the policy of seceding in time.

To a Protestant, and an avowed adherent of the princes he loved, Clarence had no hesitation in speaking of the opposite party with the indignation their pride and falsehood merited, by which means St. Maur became more clearly informed of the declension of the Protestant interest and that of the Bourbons; and saw fit to leave off courting the young foreigner, whose principal hopes appeared

built upon their influence at home and abroad.

Aurelie was, consequently, instructed — with plausible sentiment instructed — to follow the same course: and, after half an hour's tears given to the recollection of some day-dreams about her expected husband's brilliant destiny, and her triumph over certain court beauties in consequence, she dried her sparkling eyes for newer conquests, and finally left Clarence to the liberty he sought.

A communication from her absent brother greatly fortified Aurelie, in that heroic resolution, and admirable obedience, which her stern sister, though advising adherence to the reserve they dictated, stigmatised with far different names. The persons Victor was staying amongst were either old or new creatures of the reigning faction; and the contempt with which they affected to speak of the Prince de Condé's concerns, extended to all connected with him

by blood or affection. Consequently, Clarence's Willoughby's long-contested rights in his own country were ridiculed with as much satire as vivacity. The jests of this boasted society were repeated not unfrequently to Madame de Roche Blanc, even by Ma'mselle Aurelie. She either could not refuse herself the amusement of repeating in a poignant tone, the epigrammatic point which embellished these pleasantries, as they were called, or she secretly enjoyed disturbing Aigline's complexion, by lowering the consequence of the man whom the sharp-sighted coquette saw had neglected her attractions for those of his humble charmer.

Clarence experienced the effects of such despicable levity of heart, where he was indeed vulnerable. After earnest, almost affectionate importunity, when he was once or twice admitted into Madame la Baronne's dressing-room, at Chateau

Roche Blanc, she said so little, and her manner of replying to his amiable anxiety about her health was so cold and repressing, that he quickly fancied he was not welcome. This ungraciousness, however, he attributed to habitual humour, aggravated by illness and long anxiety; and he forgot it. He suspected not that it really meant any thing hostile to those wishes respecting Aigline which he was well pleased Madame de Roche Blanc should discern through his manner; and which he only delayed expressing to her natural guardians, until he should receive from herself the permission to do so. His characteristic cheerfulness rendered him proof against slight suspicions of any kind; and a lucky chance which had occurred of making the proposed arrangement at L'étoile more immediately profitable than his father had calculated upon, gave new impulse to his spirits. While concluding

this business, an opportunity occurred of engaging Aigline alone, and he did not fail to seize it.

Clarence prefaced the declaration his fevered cheek and hurried manner announced, by telling her that he had the best possible reasons for believing the English queen decidedly favourable to his interests now; that, consequently, he was likely to have more than L'étoile and a life of obscurity to offer the future partner of his joys and cares; and that now, since he might, without selfish precipitancy, entreat the only woman he was conscious of loving, to pledge her heart to him, he trusted it was not left for this moment to acquaint Aigline that it was from her hand he hoped happiness.

Aigline heard him, not with soft, delight-expressing blushes: she stood pale, trembling, tearless. Unwilling to explain the cause of her seeming insensibility, yet as loth to let him believe her

insensible to the generous passion he professed, with difficulty she withdrew the hand he was clasping persuasively in his; and averting her face, said, in an inward voice, "This is not a time for such conversation, Clarence; — my mother dying daily, — ruin hanging over our whole family, — my sisters helpless from different causes. I must live for a very different happiness in life than that of — making myself happy!" She would have said, if she durst, but she sighed the words away, more gravely adding, "You will not renew this subject again; for I must not listen to it."

"And why not listen to it — unless" — Clarence asked, and stopt; regarding her with the expression of a checked heart.

Aigline was all confused and bewildered: with Clarence's actual words mixed those said to her in former times by her mother, and by the nun at St. Geneviéve's, whose solemn warning against

the yielding tenderness of her nature often thrilled through her memory.—Scarcely knowing what she now said, and merely solicitous to end so dangerous a conversation at its commencement, she faltered out something about the impropriety of making, or hearing such addresses, without the sanction of parents.

Clarence caught at this seeming encouragement; joyfully assuring her that he had sought and obtained his father's sanction ere he would presume to utter what was in his breast; suggesting the long friendship between their parents as a reason for hoping that the only son of Mr. Willoughby, with or without an addition to the moderate independence in which they had first known him, would not be deemed presumptious in pretending to their daughter.

Aigline, now paler than before, evaded this remark—for she feared it would be wrong to acknowledge her mother's

selfishness — exclaiming, "What avails those conjectures, dear Clarence! I tell you, that I am self-destined to a single life; and you need not regret it. By and by, when you are elevated to the rank we all hope for you, you will thank me for this seeming unkindness. I have not lived in the ambitious, busy world, as you have done lately; yet I can imagine a time, when even you, might repent a hasty engagement, and wish —

Aigline was not permitted to finish the ungracious sentence: she had rather meant it as an evasive pleasantry, than as an accusation, and she forced a smile while uttering it; but ere the last words passed her lips, Clarence's face lost both its colour and its ardent expression.

"And you think this, Aigline?" he asked with a swelling heart; "I have not deserved it;" and drawing back almost proudly as he spoke, he left her way to pass him, and depart.

Aigline, who was really endeavouring to get from him, hesitated, and remained: tears started into her eyes, and her first impulse was to unsay the injurious thing she had uttered from mere dizziness of every faculty; but conquering herself, she said more calmly, "Believe me, I do full justice to your present sincerity and generosity; but surely it is not thinking unkindly, to suppose that you may be mistaking brotherly affection for absolute love, and that—"

"Enough—enough, Aigline!" Clarence exclaimed passionately. "If you felt any thing like what I feel now, you would know the mistake impossible: and unless you did feel thus for me,—I would not accept the gift of a loveless heart, even though it came in the dear shape I see before me!"

How dear, and how charming Clarence thought that form, his eyes, flooded with tenderness, distinctly told, as he

tore their gaze away. Aigline cast down her eyes, with a throbbing mixture of self-distrust and delight: she felt her own weakness, and with difficulty articulated, "I have never pretended to feel more than friendship for you, Clarence; you surely, therefore, have no right to be displeased at my refusing to alter the terms we are upon with each other. When my mother is taken away, must I not live for my sisters?"

"And can you not live for them with me, Aigline?" Clarence asked, in a voice of such penetrating tenderness and generous hope, as unnerved all Aigline's frame. "Do you not believe," he continued, finding she did not answer, "that your sisters would be my sisters; that I would, for your sake, share with them my wealth or poverty? O, Aigline! how little do you seem to know me now! I might have hoped, that in the avowal of my love for yourself, you would have

found every promise you could desire, for them that belong to you."

Clarence's feelings were taken by surprize, therefore wounded more keenly: he had relied too confidently upon his early power over Aigline, and yielded too easily to the expectations natural to so sanguine a temper as his; he had besides indulged the delight of a generous passion, conscious that it was about to make a willing sacrifice of many ambitious objects, for the attainment of a single one, valuable only to private affection.

Pained and disappointed, something of honourable resentment mixed with the sad expression of his countenance. Aigline's heart was in one point unlike his; it was not a proud one. Its humility and softness, indeed, had ever been exaggerated, when Clarence was in question; and now dissolving into tears, she said, faintly, "Your generosity overcomes me, dear Clarence, but it cannot tempt me to act otherwise than is

right in my situation. For God's sake, do not destroy my chief happiness — that of talking to you, and telling you all my foolish griefs, as I would wish to do to François, were he old enough. — Pray suffer me to forget this conversation, and when next we are together, let us be as we used to be, cheerful, confiding friends."

"No, Aigline!" exclaimed Clarence, in a transport of impatient fondness, "I can never again see you with the calm pleasure of friendship: your society, from this hour, must be misery or rapture to me. But, I am a fool to proceed — I see you are indeed right, about one of us at least — that you care nothing for me, and, therefore, it will not afflict you much, if, rejected by you, my destiny fixes me for ever in England."

"Unjust, unkind Clarence! when did I say this?" exclaimed Aigline, ready to seize the arm he had motioned her with to silence, and weep out over it the confession of her answering tenderness:

but Clarence was gone; leaving only the remembrance of his generous and ardent love, to plead in extenuation of the violence into which disappointment had wrought him.

It would be wrong to conceal how much of joy mixed with the poignant anguish of her he left thus abruptly. Only they who have never loved, can believe it possible for one, circumstanced like her, to be *grieved* at the testimony of an affection she shared, but durst not accept. The heroism of tender, inexperienced youth, could go no further than she was determined to go — namely, to act in obedience to a parent's injunctions, even though inwardly allowing that they were hard — probably selfish: — and while she exclaimed, perhaps, not exactly in these measured words, —

> Well! come what sorrow may — one blissful thought
> May still, in secret, to this heart be pressed;
> Like beggar-child against the widowed breast
> Of its poor, houseless mother —

she felt that the consciousness of Clarence's generosity would, in addition to that of his preference, sweeten all the remainder of her life.

After a short period of such mental exaltation, depression again stole upon her, while, with a sunk heart, she prepared to hear of his immediate departure from Bearn, or for his determined absence from Roche Blanc. But Clarence reappeared the next day; ashamed of his impetuosity, and seeking pardon by petitioning looks.

Pleased with his contrition, and contented to see him awhile only in general society, lest his passion should burst forth again ere her own feelings were manageable, Aigline received him with a chastened smile, and treated him with something of reserve, more distancing in its effect than she absolutely intended. Clarence saw that she carefully avoided meeting him alone: and once, when some of the Baron's company were disputing

the question of an allegory in the transgression of our first parents, he bent his face towards Aigline, saying, in a low, agitated voice — "I fear, all we that suffer in this world, are driven from our paradise by some fault or folly of our own. If I could have contented myself with your friendship —" he stopped on the entrance of a visitor; and his eyes, suffused nearly to overflowing, averted themselves, that she might not see tears in them — yet he added, more earnestly and falteringly, "I cannot stand this estrangement, Aigline — I am conquered — I accept your friendship."

Aigline answered, by putting her hand into his for a moment, without speaking — the liveliest joy radiated from her beautiful eyes and cheeks — she seemed to have found again the friend she had lost, and her pure love was satisfied. The next moment she glided from him; yet quickly returning, established herself by his side with much of their old free-

dom, and began talking to him of Paris, and his friend Adhemar, and of his absent father, until happiness reappeared upon Clarence's countenance and in her own heart.

CHAP. IV.

In yielding to the terms Aigline prescribed, Clarence believed himself sincerely resolved rather to abide by them, than banish himself anew from her society, by moody adherence to the declaration that he would rather not see her at all than see her merely as a friend. He soon ceased, however, to keep this last engagement. Admitted once more to her little confidences, and learning, unperceived by herself, the lively interest she had taken in the best part of his welfare, which Pauline St. Maur had taught her to believe was in danger, he began to hope that some false notion of unsteadiness, or susceptibility, was at the

bottom of her refusal, to hear him on one important subject: — this flattered his passion, while every day's observation of her character increased it. Seduced by such appearances, at last he began to insinuate, and finally to plead again his passion, in their occasional walks under the evergreen shades of the chateau.

Aigline at first, from mere shamefacedness, affected not to understand that he was breaking his compact; and at length, unable to continue so poor a defence, renewed the assurance of her displeasure, and withdrew again from his particular society. Often, during this period, had she gone from him, resolved to open her oppressed heart to her mother — sometimes in the faint hope that his disinterested ardour would win the favour he wished — sometimes anxious only to relieve herself from the load of concealment, and receive an accession of strength from stronger impressions of duty: — but ever when she went

prepared to avow her own weakness and Clarence's importunity, Madame de Roche Blanc's greater indisposition, or peculiar mood, or complete absorption in Cecile, made her daughter recoil, and hesitate till the moment passed away.

Perhaps there is not a more courageous act in life than that of a young creature voluntarily confessing an attachment which has been previously denounced to her as wrong, or ridiculous. It ought to be expected, certainly, by all to whom the young heart owes obedience with reverence, — because every right act is demanded of us — but it should also be met with indulgence and approbation: sometimes even woo'd. — Neither of these soothers could Aigline hope from her mother; and now, less than ever. For prejudiced by the idle talk of Aurelie St. Maur, Madame de Roche Blanc concluded Clarence's English prospects visionary, and those held up to him in France vanished with the

power of his patrons. Soured by domestic vexations, which reasonably made her think no misery comparable to that of belonging to an expectant, Madame de Roche Blanc often animadverted upon the strange protraction of Clarence Willoughby's expectations with a derisive smile, which showed what she thought of their value; and sometimes congratulated herself upon having saved her daughter, perhaps, by a timely warning, from the danger of attaching herself to him. In the face of such remarks, what timid girl could say, unasked, that the warning came too late; or plead for permission to accept the boon thus considered? Aigline still purposing, however, to do so, went on from day to day, striving to make the confession, and as often repelled from it. She drew consolation simply from the sincerity of her own resolution.

Clarence had been three weeks at L'étoile when he received a dispatch

from Adhemar de Bourbon, briefly summoning him to join the latter in the vicinity of Nerac, as expeditiously as possible, having a very important matter to discuss; requesting him to leave all other business unsettled, rather than fail in this appointment, and ending with the usual expressions of perfect affection and confidence.

What this important matter might be, and whether a fortunate or unfortunate one, not a phrase in the letter enabled Clarence to judge: it might relate to himself, or belong solely to Adhemar — be it what it would, Clarence could not hesitate how to act. Tortured, however, by Aigline's total change of conduct, yet still clinging to the convictions inseparable from her former manner, he determined to end his suspense at once by frankly stating his wishes to the Baron, and enquiring whether his circumstances or himself were peculiarly disagreeable to Aigline's family.

With this purpose he flew to Roche Blanc. Aigline had lately avoided a tête-a-tête with him, by charging the servants never to admit any gentleman to her when she was alone: and she had softened the pain of this partial banishment by making him understand that it was a general order. When he was told, therefore, that the Baron was out, but Ma'mselle in the parlour, he entered it, expecting to see her in the midst of visitors. What was his surprize to behold Aigline standing attentively by the side of Victor St. Maur, in the recess of a window, while he was earnestly conversing with her yet in a tone modulated to the most seductive softness!

Clarence's instant recoil, the look which accompanied it, his indiscreet exclamation escaping with a sort of gasp, the mixture of consternation and vexation, in short, with which he returned the salutation of the cool and courtly St. Maur, at one moment informed the latter

what he then felt, and what further he was capable of feeling.

A heartless man of the world could not resist such a temptation of avenging many a mortification inflicted unintentionally by this unpolished mountaineer in the circles of Paris: and seeing Aigline all lost in the distress of being found alone with him, he well knew what malicious advantage to make of her tremor and his own calmness. He left her no time for explaining that he brought a verbal message from her brother François, which she was listening to with very different feelings than the delightful one jealousy imagined, but immediately flowed out into the most graceful tide of compliment and pleasure at the prospect of renewing the acquaintance between him and the Chevalier Willoughby. During the ten minutes Clarence remained — for his impatient agony could not brook longer stay — St. Maur managed to throw such an air of security even to carelessness,

in his particular manner of addressing Aigline, that the hateful light which all at once had broken upon Clarence at his entrance, became too glaring, he thought, for endurance; and scarcely articulating some broken words about regret at not finding the Baron, whom he could not wait for, he retreated as abruptly as he had entered.

Victor St. Maur could have laughed when he saw him disappear—and laughed with contempt unutterable: for to the unfeeling, every proof of strong emotion is a subject of scorn. But St. Maur had the full gratification of turning this unguardedness into a mean of torturing his victim.

Thus are the best and the warmest natures, at the mercy of such as, ignorant of all, save the crouching passions, lay in wait to spring upon their prey, when it is unconscious of danger, or incapable of defence.

Aigline had not once spoken during

Clarence's brief visit — first, because she actually had not voice; next, because her companion's smooth stream of complimentary welcome left her no room for speech; and afterwards, from apprehension of appearing too solicitous for Clarence to know all her actions, and their motives. She was distressed and grieved — but simply from the circumstance of seeming insincere in the assurance she had made before him, that she could not spare time from more pressing duties, for receiving any male visitors when her step-father was not in the chateau. She little guessed the crueller idea which had taken possession of him.

The shock of seeing Aigline alone with Victor St. Maur, whose return seemed to have been concealed from him, at once dislodged the saner faculties of Clarence: His perturbed feelings were just in a state to catch fire at any thing. And that air of security joined to *empressement*,

which St. Maur thought proper to affect, completed the fatal impression.

Aigline's evident embarrassment was, however, equivocal: for why should she be embarrassed, unless she feared giving Clarence pain? and as our agitated hero asked himself this question, he regarded her earnestly for a moment. But her countenance, all changing as it was, told him nothing. Vainly, indeed, do we look into the eyes of those we are deeply interested in, for a knowledge of their immediate feelings: our own emotion gives the expression we either hope or fear to find. It is precisely when the meaning of a countenance becomes of the most importance, that it ceases to be intelligible to us.

Victor St. Maur had continued talking, and Clarence had broken away in disgust and despair. Hurrying from the chateau to his own home, he hastily concluded all his dispositions there; and, after seve-

ral contradictory resolutions, at last wrote her these lines: —

"I have written, and torn I know not how many mad, unjustifiable letters, to you, Aigline. I have no right to question your right to love another: for you love Victor St. Maur; yet I cannot help reproaching you for concealing this from one, to whom the knowledge of it was of such consequence. No — you could not have been so determined with the Clarence, whose companionship you prized so dearly in our childish days, if you had not known by experience the difference of such lambent love as that, and the one which burns — consumes — destroys me at this moment! You need not fear any further importunity from me: when I can no longer make an illusion to myself, about the cause of your altered conduct, I should despise myself if I went on remonstrating against it. But with this, my last farewell, let me intreat you by our old friendship — by the regard you

have for my father's opinion, by your duty to yourself — learn more of St. Maur, ere you commit your fate wholly into his hands. I know him too superficially, to dare an opinion in my present agitated state. Heaven bless and direct you Aigline!"

This letter was put into Aigline's hands the morning after Clarence left L'étoile. She was ill prepared for its contents. Her heart was still heavy with the pressing message from François, of which St. Maur had been the bearer. This designing person had purposely gone out of his way on his return home, with the view of extracting from Lolótte's young brother the secret of her residence. But François had the courage to refuse answering a direct question, and the good sense to be on his guard against betraying ones. He confessed that he saw his sister occasionally, though not often, being forbidden to re-awaken her sensibilities: but he intreated St. Maur to

apprize Aigline of what, he feared, she was not told, from overkindness to her, that their poor sister was evidently wasting away, through mere longing for home and her dearest companion there.

When Aigline repeated this to the Baron — for she would not disturb her sick mother with the sight of her distress, he strove to make light of Lolótte's loss of health and spirits: but urged, that even were she really ill, she must be sure of better advice and attendance at St. Geneviéve's than could be afforded her at Chateau Roche Blanc in its present hospital-like state.

With this miserable consolation, and no hope of release from her other duties for the dearer one of hastening to cheer this forlorn sister, Aigline, in her saddest mood, received the letter of Clarence. Its bitterness was aggravated to her by her other griefs.

That Clarence should believe her incapable of what is called love, she could

bear; but that he should imagine any sentiment of her heart superior to her friendship for him, gave her the sharpest pang. Jealous of St. Maur! of one that she had forbidden herself to like beyond a certain point, even though his well-acted sentiment pleased her, — lest it should seem to encroach upon that part of her heart sacred to the companion of her childhood! How often had she checked momentary mirth, or deep interest, when excited by the very St. Maur, out of a romantic notion that either was a sort of infidelity to Clarence! She could have wept her spirit at her eyes, that Clarence was gone in such misapprehension: for whither might his despair or his indignation hurry him! She shuddered at the prospect for him and for herself, — and for once, absolute distraction gave her strength. She determined to make an effort, at least, of opening her mother's eyes to the merits of one who was willing to wed her whole family

with herself; and if she failed in this, she hoped to induce Madame de Roche Blanc to commission her husband with a fair statement of her maternal reasons for inclining Aigline to a life of singleness, and so convince Clarence that Aigline, so far from being attached to Victor St. Maur, allowed her heart no other object than the fulfilment of its first duties.

At this hope, the elastic spirit of youth sprung up again: and, drying her eyes, Aigline hastened from the garden, where she was walking, into the house; in the firm resolution of throwing herself before her mother, and repeating all that had passed of late within her own timid bosom. But the right purpose was suspended.

Upon entering the chateau, Aigline found every body in consternation: a messenger had arrived from Languedoc —the great cause was decided,—and Lolótte was pronounced incapable of benefiting by the will of her ill-judging

protectress. The Baroness was in a fit; and the Baron absolutely incredulous of the event.

Love, Clarence, St. Maur — every thing was forgotten by Aigline at such a moment: or, perhaps, she thought of the two first, only to renounce the faint hope, that lingering like a last leaf in autumn, had kept her heart from feeling quite withered. After the Baron's late wastefulness, Lolótte's beggary rendered her family beggars: and was Aigline, who had refused to hear Clarence when she was comparatively prosperous, to woo his generous affection now? The sighing answer of this question put it to rest, as she believed, for ever: and crushing his letter into her breast, she started away, to see and succour her mother.

Madame de Roche Blanc was for a long time too ill to utter complaint, or hear comfort; and Aigline forbore offering the last in any other form than that of silent assiduities, until the sufferer

herself broke out into audible lamentation.

From her disjointed apostrophes, and half-irritable replies to the tumultuous questionings of her daughter, the latter became more clearly acquainted with the circumstances of her family than she had ever been; and discovered that the trifling property the Baron had lately settled upon her with such solemnity of bounty, could not pass into her power until after his death. She learnt, too, that as Lolótte's expected fortune must have enriched the family during her life, and after her death devolved upon her father as her natural heir, he had legally bound himself to devote a large portion of it to Cecile: so purchasing his wife's acquiescence in many follies she fretted at. This instrument was now of less use than that which affected to make restitution to Aigline: and Madame de Roche Blanc, contemplating with horror the want and humiliation of the darling and delicate

child, for whom she had fancied the most brilliant destiny, gave way to absolute frenzy.

As this passion of impatience subsided, Aigline cast herself at her mother's feet, renewing the promise of obeying her in all things; yet confessing, that situated as she and her sister were, and might be, she thought it possible for her mother to see cause for retracting her opinion of Clarence Willoughby's unfitness to become a protector to them hereafter.

With surprize, nay displeasuse, Madame de Roche Blanc enquired what she meant? Aigline's heart half fainted within her at the question: but recovering, and avoiding the fixed look which seemed denouncing all she was about to say, ere it could be uttered, she tremblingly, though faithfully related what had passed between her and Clarence on the forbidden subject.

Madame de Roche Blanc was so silent, and became so attentive as Aigline pro-

ceeded to repeat what he had said to her of privacy and competence at L'étoile, if higher hopes failed, that joy began to dawn upon Aigline's heart; and she detailed with more open admiration, all that he had promised of care and kindness to both her sisters, if ever she would make his home her home, and theirs.

When her daughter ended, Madame de Roche Blanc was so engrossed by her thoughts, that she let her remain some time on her knees ere she addressed her. "I never thought it would come to this!" she exclaimed with bitterness. "But if my child is to be houseless, otherwise, (Madame de Roche Blanc spoke as if she had no other child than Cecile,) any shelter is worth securing. Well then, Aigline, while my wretched existence is protracted, I expect you will not think of marrying: but when I am gone, if this young man — who, I believe, is not one of the worst — renews his suit, and has, indeed, a fixed home to assure

to you and Cecile, (Lolótte, of course, is included,) I must be reconciled — satisfied!"

Madame paused: Aigline's eyes at first involuntarily raised themselves, and fixed a look of earnest expectation upon her mother's face; but at the conclusion of this address, they fell hopelessly again under the shade of their long lashes. That "if he renew," had gone like a blighting air across her soul: yet thinking to emulate his generous love by the self-denial of hers, she repeated, with a wringing sigh, "Yes! — if he renew his suit." She then rose, tottering, from her knees, with a heart as changed as her countenance: wondering, perhaps, that her mother never seemed capable of gratefulness either to heavenly or mortal hand for any alleviation of sorrow, or any blessing; still less, thought of striving for the happiness of any living thing, save the heartless, rebellious Cecile.

"Whither is Clarence Willoughby

gone?" Madame de Roche Blanc asked, after long and gloomy abstraction. "When does he return?"

Aigline, in a voice scarcely audible, referred her to his letter. Madame de Roche Blanc read it again; that gave her no information; simply bearing testimony to the warmth and steadiness of his attachment, and to Aigline's obedience: but the first natural omission was enough for such a nature as the Baroness's; always ready to consider every speck in the horizon as portentous of future storm, and every human character as verging continually upon evil. All at once she abandoned the agreeable ideas Aigline's representations had conjured up; saw only levity, and gladness to have an excuse for giving her up, in the strain of his letter; asserted that he *must* have heard of the fatal end of the Baron's suit; and, finally, fell back into such a paroxysm of despair for Cecile, of reproach at the Baron, and resentment

at his poor aunt for having left her property so awkwardly, that she soon placed herself in a condition of serious alarm to those about her. Stimulants, then opiates, and, lastly, complete quiet, was all that could be attempted for her preservation.

The Baron, when he saw her stretched in total exhaustion upon her bed, could not help muttering the first moral reflection he had, perhaps, ever made: it imported, that had she submitted to the mortification Providence tried her with, and consented to receive Lolótte home, in exchange for Cecile, (as their kinswoman once wished her to have done,) that little sharp-witted girl might now have had sure possession of the estates taken from her sister. Aigline, as she closed her mother's curtains, and sat down to watch beside her, clasped her hands in sad and spiritless prayer: looked after the impatient Cecile, who had come reluctantly into the room with her father,

and now ran rudely out; thought of the banished Lolôtte; and, shuddering at the prospects of her whole family, resigned her own separate destiny and the constancy of Clarence into the care of unerring wisdom.

Clarence, meanwhile, hastened not to the palace of Nerac, but, as his friend's letter indicated, to the lodge of a Gascon noble in the forest of Nerac, whither Adhemar had accompanied his late guest the Vidame of Chartres, under pretext of chasing the wild boar with him and his host; but, in reality, to receive the oath of new confederates. It was late at night when Clarence arrived; but though he heard sounds of convivial cheerfulness issuing from the hall where he was told the Vidame and a party were at supper, he heard that Adhemar de Bourbon, after having been out for some hours alone, had returned, and declining to join the travellers, had retired to his own apartments.

Thither his friend sought him: the lofty, dark pannelled room into which he entered, though not a sleeping chamber, had no other occupant than the Chevalier; who sat by an open hearth, where piled-up logs that had once glowed cheeringly, were now smothered by their own grey ashes. His lamp too, for lack of oil or of trimming, was nearly extinguished. Adhemar had, therefore, been sitting thus some time: yet he still retained his riding-cloak and hat.

Clarence remarked these circumstances to him with something of the affectionate pleasantry common between them: for Clarence, like many other persons naturally chearful, was often mechanically gay, when his heart was in fact ill at ease. De Bourbon passed his hand across his eyes as he started up, saying, with a forced smile, "Men of my temperament, Willoughby, are rarely caught indulging in such day-dreams as come unsolicited into the thoughts of such as

you. In truth, I have subjects enough for bitter musing — and you are most welcome, just now."

"You are disappointed, I fear!" exclaimed his friend; painful sympathy clouding the exhilarating look he would fain have assumed. "Completely!" was the laconic reply.

After a momentary pause, Clarence pursued his enquiries; and de Bourbon, often stopping short to rail at his own weakness, for having expected such a miracle in his destiny, as the regeneration of his parent's good name — as often losing himself in some other thought, till it glazed his eyes with tears, confusedly acquainted Clarence with the particulars of his disappointment.

The Vidame of Chartres positively denied having ever reported more on the subject of Adhemar's father, than that he knew it was his resolution to refuse, through life, all proposals of matching

him to any other woman than Ma'mselle de Briquemart: aware, that without the consent of his royal cousin, no ceremony that was intended to bind him to her, would be of any use; nay, produce no other effect than that of incensing the king, to the destruction of their eventual hopes.

The aunt of Adhemar, the only surviving member of his mother's immediate family, did not add to this testimony. When Clarence arrived, the Chevalier had just returned from visiting her: and though the details she gave him, exasperated some of his darkest passions, they tended to soften his asperity towards the memory of his mother.

It was evident from this lady's statement, that after the king had positively refused his consent to a marriage which he justly believed would dangerously increase the power and insolence of the Guises,—Ma'mselle de Briquemart's guardians (the heads of that proud house,) had

purposely left her in the way of danger, as if endeavouring to tempt the frailty of her lover, and render their subsequent marriage a point of honor and conscience with him. In both designs they succeeded: but François de Bourbon was summoned to camp; and while he was thence intreating permission to repair the wrong his criminal passion had committed, (a consummation, the Guises presumptuously considered certain,) the sad victim of ill-regulated affection, perished in giving birth to their child. That son, after above three and twenty years avoidance of all that revived her memory, could no longer refuse tears to the description of his mother's shame and contrition, as given by a sister who loved while she condemned her; and who was now passing her life in prayers for her soul. He confessed to Clarence, that his stern nature dissolved; and that in pressing his aunt's hand to his lips and to his

heart, he felt a melancholy satisfaction in identifying her for the moment, with his idea of his mother.

"There cannot, however," he added, "be any sweetness to me in the memory of my parents — for their transgression has poisoned my existence: and thus, is the tremendous sentence, of sins visited upon the children, fearfully explained. O! Willoughby, ever abhor, flee as I do, the first throb of lawless passion — even of the purest, if it cannot be virtuously blessed! — What is the gift of life to the wretched creature who springs from the indulgence of such passion, but a curse — a space for them to wander — struggle — or sin in? — perhaps, to do all!" ——

The last words, Adhemar spoke inwardly; for certain engagements thronged into his thoughts, troubling him with doubt of their rectitude. The remembrance of those engagements, connected

with ideas of danger and loss, of death, or highest fortune, at once banished those softer and sadder images which had their full share in his foregone remark.

Clarence noticed the extraordinary change in his friend's countenance, and looking earnestly upon him, exclaimed, "You have more to tell me yet, Adhemar!" At this address, the Chevalier turned his dark eyes towards him; their darkness and flashing movement, more striking from the extraordinary ghastliness and stillness of the rest of his face. "I have just seen Lolótte!"

"Lolótte! — how! — where?"

The Chevalier did not answer, until he was able to command his voice, but although that was slow and steady, his lip quivered. "I saw her to my amazement, at the convent of St. Genevieve, where I went to visit my aunt. The dog I had given her, scented its former master, I suppose, for it burst into

the parlour, where I was talking to my aunt, through the grate, and Lolótte followed, to regain him. I thought I saw her ghost — rather let me say, her angel — so beautiful — so transparent — so unearthly — such joy flashed over her face! — I heard her give a faint cry: — I think it was her sister she called upon — and then she sunk down at my feet."

"O Heaven! and what became of you at that moment?" —

"Willoughby!" de Bourbon said, crimsoning as he spoke, yet determinately keeping his eyes from receding, as if resolved that his friend should see strait into his breast. "I am ashamed to tell even you, what frantic purpose was for the moment in my heart, as I lifted her to it, and held her there, forgetful of every thing but herself! — all that this world contains besides, was vanished. My aunt's

thrilling voice recalled me to reason: never shall I forget the words with which she adjured me — the names she employed, to fright me at my own emotion! Many things then passed between us, over the unconscious form of Lolótte, which if they have rooted some fond regrets more strongly than ever, will, I trust, prevent me from sinning against holier convictions." Adhemar's voice shook at the conclusion, and precipitating his face in his hands, he yielded all at once to one of those passionate bursts, the more violent from their infrequency, which never, until Clarence became known to him, had he suffered human eye to witness.

His friend waited with a pitying heart, until the tempest died away of itself; then anxious to relieve the fears he felt for Lolótte, enquired, whether she were altered from illness, or mere dispiritedness.

"Dejection has begun it — death, I

fear, will end it!" de Bourbon said severely. "So barbarous a banishment — and to a convent, seems inexplicable to me. What motive can justify her parents, or excuse her sister?"

Clarence impetuously took up the defence of Aigline: that of the Baron and Baroness, he abandoned. Many dangers had certainly threatened their child-like daughter, in consequence of her beauty and fortune; but from these she might have been preserved even in her own home, had they been contented to undergo the restraints necessary for that purpose. The Baroness, he sincerely believed, did not know exactly the state of the poor exile — but even she was so earnest to keep Lolótte's place of residence concealed, that when he made suit, at Aigline's request, for permission to visit her sister, and bring her an account of her, he had been decidedly refused. He now repeated his enquiries to his friend concerning the opinion enter-

tained of Lolótte by those about her; and finding that the faithful Thomasine considered her rapidly wasting away, from sorrow of heart and weariness of life, hastily exclaimed, — "Why cannot I go back on the instant to Roche Blanc with this account? — a letter from you, would shame and awe this insensible father into his duty: at any rate, I might save Aigline her after-life of regret — and to do that" —he stopt, sighed, and turned away.

The Chevalier was too much occupied with other interests, to observe anything peculiar in his friend's tone. "There is other work cut out for you," he said; "I will send her brother. You must to Blois, — to the English ambassador. If you are wise, you will be off to-morrow by cock-crow."

"Good God! is this the business you wrote of! — What has happened! — My father" —— Clarence's blanched and quivering lips could utter no more.

Adhemar de Bourbon quieted his

friend's liveliest fears; and drawing forth a letter, gave it him to read.

In the same envelope, were a few lines from Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Elizabeth's representative at the court of France, requesting the Chevalier to forward the enclosed order, as quickly as possible to Clarence, who was presumed to be in his society, or within his reach. The order itself, simply purported that it was the Queen of England's pleasure for the receiver of it, immediately to despoil himself of every outward pretension to relationship with the noble house of De la Pole; such as armorial bearings, decorations, &c. and upon no account to presume setting foot on English ground under peril of his life, without her Majesty's express permission.

Clarence was thunderstruck at this evident reverse of fortune. Unconscious of meriting it by a single indiscretion or presumption of his own, he naturally concluded, that he owed it to the ill offices

of the favourite Dudley, who might have discovered the Chevalier de Bourbon's visit to the queen, and her flattering reception of him, and thus wreak upon de Bourbon's friend, the jealous alarm inspired by the former. He expressed this opinion with his wonted rapidity of judgment; and with even more than his ordinary warmth, (for his feelings yet vibrated with previous irritation), protested, that nothing should induce him to abate of his lawful pretensions, until they were actually decided against, by the form of justice to which his father had unluckily consented.

De Bourbon suffered him to exhale his first indignation undisturbed, after which he spoke to him the language of sense and better experience. He shewed him that obedience to this harsh mandate was indispensable, unless he meant to brave his sovereign, and so destroy at once the hope arising from some new turn in his favour. To submit with out-

ward cheerfulness to the command, as taking it for a mere form, ordinary in such cases, would be the only mode of reconciling dignity with duty: in his interview with the ambassador, he might enter his protest against having his obedience mistaken for an admission of inadequate pretensions; and state that he obeyed now, as he would hope ever to do, when her majesty's commands extended only to the badges, not the body of honour.

"Conduct yourself with prudence, for once in your life, when your interest is at stake," Adhemar continued, smiling kindly though sadly, "and you will happily frustrate the main aim of those who may have reckoned upon thus pushing you into an open shew of refractoriness. If it prove simply an act of weakness in Elizabeth, veering about, at the breath of her favourite, I think I know arguments that will right you again. But if there be displeasure under the

command — if those at home or abroad have got scent of our visit to England, the mischief is desperate! — it will import me, to know that, on the instant."

"Kindest! truest of friends!" Clarence exclaimed, imagining de Bourbon spoke solely with reference to his fortunes, suspecting not that he trembled for his own stake in the secret, "I wish this charge may have originated in a notion that I have blabbed the favour shewn me — for then the evil ceases, the moment I disprove it."

The Chevalier shook his head with the same disturbed look; but suddenly trying to clear his brow, he said, evasively, "Suspicion once roused, is not so soon lulled: however, I exhort you to press for her majesty's reasons, when you see the ambassador. Be away by day-break: I will follow, the moment some of the family from Roche Blanc — I cannot go

hence till then." The variations of de Bourbon's complexion completed what his words left unfinished; he looked down, and sighed profoundly.

Clarence affectionately and repeatedly pressed his hand as they stood together at a window, whither the moon had attracted them, almost mechanically, after both the lamp and the fire were out. He withdrew his eyes from her cold beam, and glancing on the abstracted expression of his friend's countenance, said, hesitatingly, —

"I had a long story to tell you of my own heart — a foolish one enough — but this is not the time for it: and you teach how useless regrets are to be mastered. I will not trust myself back to Roche Blanc, but do as you counsel; be on my horse for Blois to-morrow, ere sun rise."

"A story to tell me!" repeated Adhemar. "You have not been refused?"

The manner he asked this, showed that the idea of an attachment between Clarence and Aigline had long been familiar to his thoughts.

"Indeed I have," was the ill articulated answer.

De Bourbon expressed his surprize and concern with a tempered earnestness, which promised indulgence to his more impassioned companion's weakest regrets: the latter, however, not only refused himself the relief of complaint, but the tempting prospect of being flattered back into self-delusion; and, striving to smile, deprecated further conversation on the subject: recurring again to the more important one of his concerns in England.

Adhemar, who had yet to send a messenger to Nerac for young François, and had besides to see one of the guests in the house ere he slept, briefly repeated what he most wished to impress upon his friend's mind; and, counselling him to take a few hours rest ere he resumed

travelling, bade him farewell, till they should meet again at Blois.

The hunting-lodge where he left his friend, being in the road from Bearn to Nerac, Clarence was agreeably surprized by encountering François la Marot, obeying, at the earliest hour possible, the summons of his first patron. A joyful greeting passed between them: for François, in spite of many unweeded faults, had a warm and grateful heart; and Clarence rejoiced in this opportunity of explaining the reason of his seeming desertion from friendly duty.

A short parley was necessary to acquaint each other with their different purposes. Clarence learnt that François had commissioned Victor St. Maur to inform Aigline of his uneasiness about Lolótte; and François was, therefore, commissioned to tell Aigline that Clarence repented the violent letter he had written to her; since he now understood why this new acquaintance was received

by her in private, when an old friend like him was excluded. Further than this Clarence ventured not to say; not that he would have cared to own his peculiar affection for Aigline, even to her young brother; but, situated as he now was, with a threatening cloud before him, he knew not whether it might not be as selfish as vain: and though a sufficient reason was given for the appearance which had awakened his jealousy, still the actual cause for such jealousy too probably existed. Some words which dropt from the high-spirited boy, made him see that he suspected Victor St. Maur of a tender interest in one of his sisters. François seemed to think it was Lolótte; and although such a suspicion fired Clarence's heart with equal indignation, he felt how preferable it was, to the fear of his loving and being beloved of Aigline.

"I was a fool," François said, "to give my commission to him; but, in

truth, I had no other way of obeying my father, who forbade me to write about Lolótte, and yet of letting Aigline know how dismally poor Lolótte was going on. And I did not observe any thing particular in St. Maur's expressions, until he said something which made me suspect that he either admires poor Lolótte more than is safe, or else chooses to show great anxiety about her to ingratiate himself with Aigline. But I have heard things of him I don't like; and shall take care, if the Chevalier sends me to Roche Blanc, to put them all on their guard against his plausibleness."

This determination was exactly what Clarence could have wished; and exhorting him to persevere in it, he charged him anew to tell Aigline that a very unpleasant communication from England forced him to proceed, without loss of time, to the English ambassador; but that his friends at Roche Blanc would possess his thoughts, and have his prayers.

A cordial shake of the hand was then exchanged between the smart little page and his indulgently-smiling friend; after which, each spurred his horse in a different direction, on their separate errands.

The human heart, if it is formed for any thing good, is early susceptible of concern for others, and blame of itself: young François, after parting from Clarence, rode along, condemning himself for not having more strongly remonstrated with his father, against the cruel policy of keeping Lolótte's declining health from the knowledge of her mother and sister: and many an affectionate sigh did he give to the expected sorrow of Aigline, and to the condition of poor Lolótte herself! François, indeed, had remonstrated oftener than he remembered having done; but it was in vain. His inconsiderate father had so long accustomed himself to regard this unfortunate daughter as a mere automaton, by whom change of place and persons was unob-

served, that he never deemed it part of his duty to provide, with her personal safety, against the effects of her possible regret at separation from her family. Each time he visited her, which was not often, he saw her fading more obviously: but at first he satisfied himself with accidental causes, such as a hot or a cold day, and then admitted that she wasted surprizingly. Her life was of vital importance to them all, until the fate of the legacy were determined, yet he scrupled to bring her home, lest her return should increase the gloom fast spreading there; and he would not suffer Aigline to know her state, because her importunities would be unceasing for the transfer he was determined to resist. It was very distressing, he thought, and very disagreeable; and he was very sorry for poor Lolótte; and sorry his wife was so ill that Aigline could not be spared from her; and sorry that his duty to the rest of his family made it necessary for him to keep this

unfortunately-lovely daughter thus out of harm's way. But it could not be helped: and, as a sound philosopher and a good christian, (to which characters the Baron had an equal claim,) he must submit. The Baron *did* submit so completely, that from the moment in which he thus summoned himself to the bar of conscience, he never once re-argued the subject; until it was all at once brought back to his recollection, by the arrival and mission of his son.

Ere François presented himself to Adhemar de Bourbon, he had obtained leave of absence from Nerac, without higher reference than to the governor of the pages. His turn of attendance upon the little prince of Bearn having just terminated, he was allowed full liberty to be with his family for any period short of a month.

The Chevalier was not sorry to find that his interference would not be required; and having coupled much com-

mendation of the boy's fore-thought with the instructions he gave, (hiding his wringing anxiety for Lolótte, meanwhile, under a cold and stately demeanour,) he dispatched him on his errand, escorted by one of his own trustiest domestics.

François found all at his home in the first pangs of their recent misfortune: the very name of Lolótte was a sort of knell to the Baroness. Yet she saw in the Chevalier's interference, and the sternly-dignified rebuke contained in his letter, a destruction to other hopes: and although these, grounded upon the power and stability of the Bourbons, were greatly diminished by the diminished consequence of that house, in the present blight of her children's fortunes, they were still an object to grasp at. Her ambition had long secretly coveted some honourable appointment for her darling Cecile, whenever she should reach an age fit for gracing and profiting by it: except through the medium of

the Vicomte de Limoges, she had no channel to the favour of the queen of Navarre. The Baron, presuming upon his son's place in the palace of Anthony, had more than once risked the loss of it by indiscreet suits, and forward conduct; he was, therefore, unlikely to obtain of himself, patronage for any other branch of his family. Madame de Roche Blanc saw no alternative, but immediate conformity with the Chevalier's instructions, to send Aigline to her sister.

Necessity for further care of Lolótte, as it affected the pecuniary interests of her family, was indeed, over; and the Baroness was well aware that the ruinous state of her husband's finances would make it impossible for him to continue his daughter in any residence where he must pay separately for her maintenance: but what was to be done? The Baron was absent; gone to meet an eminent civilian at Foix, from whom he hoped to obtain encouragement for re-pleading the

cause in Paris. Aigline's anguish on the occasion was extreme: her sensibilities were not yet sufficiently under her own command; and even habitual dread of her mother's harsh remarks, could not assist her in tempering the exclamations of distraction with which she heard François describe the changed appearance of their once blooming sister. It was impossible too, to think of leaving her mother solely to the care of servants. The sullen misery into which Madame de Roche Blanc had fallen after her first paroxysm of violence when the law-suit ended, had aggravated her disorder to such a degree, that all around her looked daily for her dissolution. In distraction between her mother and her sister, Aigline threw herself on her knees, scarcely knowing what she did, praying aloud for the Almighty to direct her actions and her wishes. The invalid herself, sometimes willed her to return immediately with François, so to claim

merit in the opinion of the Chevalier, and bespeak his future favour; sometimes bodily suffering, and roused temper prevailed; and wounded by Cecile's callousness, or impertinences, she would exclaim, "No! let the ruin be complete! — let her fate take its chance! — I will not strip myself of my only dutiful child's support in my last hour, for that ungrateful girl!"

Aigline mediated for Cecile; and wept between regard for a mother, whom but an instant's tenderness endeared, and stronger yearnings towards the outcast Lolótte. François, with some little humour at his mother, and sincere concern for his two elder sisters, (Cecile he openly professed to have no patience with,) perhaps increased this domestic confusion. Insisting strenuously upon the Vicomte de Limoges' extreme displeasure, if they treated him with such apparent insolence as to detain him in Gascony longer than he had specified; and assert-

ing, that the loss of François' place in the royal household of Navarre, together with every future prospect dependent on it, might be the result.

"Let Aigline go alone — I mean with one of our own people, in addition to the Chevalier's servant — and I will stay. Surely, there must be some kind friend or neighbour who will come and help me to nurse you, mother?"

Madame de Roche Blanc did not answer: she knew that she had never made a friend; and remembered how often in her day of health, she had repelled the advances of an acquaintance, and withdrawn from acts of Christian charity, to such, as might on that principle alone, have now been kind Samaritans to her! The pastor's wife, indeed, deemed it her especial duty never to be wearied in well doing; and she was sure to take, cheerfully, Aigline's place in her sick-room: but then it would be for Aigline's sake, — or God's sake, — and Madame de

Roche Blanc's sullen nature rejected the obligation. She persisted in the resolution of excluding every one, except her own children and her own servants, until the Baron, or Aigline, should return.

Such an arrangement could not be consented to: Aigline could not leave a dying parent to such inadequate attendants: the best intentioned of them was but a heedless boy, somewhat inflated with ideas of his own consequence; and easily provoked by what his keen discernment saw was wrong, or wilful, though as easily made ashamed of his petulance. The person to minister to such an invalid as their mother must be very different. They must "possess their souls in patience," or fatally aggravate all her worst symptoms.

The wretched state of indecision in which such reflections kept Aigline, wasted more time than she could bear to think of; the Baron's return could not be expected for many days; yet how to

go, before he came, to take the invalid into his especial care: François, however, continued firm in his expostulation; Cecile saw fit to make temporary reparation for her fault, by a few forced caresses and scanty tears; and, for her possible advantage, (credulous dotage refusing to read consumption in her hectic cheek,) Madame de Roche Blanc determined to forego her own comfort. She decided that Aigline should set off the next day for St. Genevieve to bring Lolótte back, if she were able to encounter the journey, or to remain with her until milder weather renovated her strength. Happily for Aigline, old Godefroi, who had been at L'étoile during the last days of Clarence's residence there, had walked down into the valley to see the dear young lady of the chateau, and when he heard a question of what servant was to accompany her, earnestly offered his services.

Godefroi was old, but he was hale and

active, and used to fatigue; used also to that *prevoyance*, sometimes as necessary to a traveller as to a soldier: he pressed his offer with equal respect and kindness; and Aigline, who secretly loved to consider every thing and every body in whom Clarence was interested, as parts of himself, rejoiced when she was permitted to tell the veteran he might accompany her.

With a divided heart did she prepare for this journey: thought of herself she had none; though it was early in January, the weather unusually severe, with storms of sleet and rain that rendered the lowlands so many marshes. She took leave of her mother over night, hopeless that they should ever meet again; and, with this impression heavy on her spirits, she saw François the next morning. Her exhortations to him to quell his impatient temper, and remember to whom he was rendering the offices of affection and

duty, were enforced by the solemn assurance that she believed their mother had not long to live; and that as he obeyed this, his first call to active fulfilment of their heavenly father's will, his own future lot would be blessed or blighted.

François heard her for some time in silence: there was a sort of struggle within him, between the artless feelings of boyhood, and those notions of manliness inseparable from his premature acquisition of ostensible business in life, without, in reality, being called upon to wholesome exertion of any kind: at last, impetuously bursting into tears, and throwing himself upon her breast, he exclaimed, kissing her between every word, "I do love you, Aigline; but I own, I am always vexed at my mother; but I know it is wrong — and I promise you to do my best, to master my own vile passionateness, and show duty to her. I wish I could cut myself in two, that half

of me might stay here, and the other half go and protect you!"

Aigline's overflowing sensibility spoke in the fervent kiss she printed on his forehead, as drowned in tears, she vainly attempted to answer him. Comfort, however, was in her breast; and, as she thought of Cecile, in contrast with him, she could not refrain from whispering to herself, "even an erring heart is better than none at all."

"My sweet brother," she continued aloud, regarding him with endearment in her pensively smiling eyes, "I will trust to you. Only promise, that if any alarming change appears in my mother, you will send instantly for our good divine. I have already sent a request to his excellent wife, that I am sure she will comply with. Every day — every day I miss the dearest and most succouring of our neighbours, more and more! But you must have almost forgot Mr. Willoughby." Aigline sighed heavily, fall-

ing back upon her own thoughts for the repetition of scenes in which this honored friend had been her firmest support.

François assured her he had not forgotten Mr. Willoughby; and detaining her hand, as she would have glided from him, perhaps, to conceal increasing emotion, he delivered the message from Clarence. At that name Aigline was arrested. Young as François was, he had lived long enough in the court of a gallant monarch, to be quick at divining love-secrets: he was, also, at that age, when forward youth piques itself upon such confidences and such discoveries; and, with something of arch affection, he now made his sister sensible that her present confusion, and Clarence Willoughby's earnestness when he gave him the commission, had not passed without due comment.

Aigline answered she knew not what; and hurrying away, carried with her only the sweet consciousness that Clarence, angry and jealous as he had gone from it,

would have returned to Roche Blanc if he could. In the sort of dizziness which great agitation so often produces, she had imperfectly heard those particulars, which were meant to acquaint her that she would find only the Chevalier de Bourbon at Nerac.

CHAP. V.

Cruel circumstances conspired against Aigline's journey. By the time she reached the confines of Gascony, a river which was extraordinarily swollen by heavy rains, and other causes incidental to mountainous countries, had overflowed its banks, and swept away the only bridge that crossed it in their direct road. Her careful guardian did not think himself justified in suffering her to dare its impetuous current in a boat; and they were obliged, therefore, to go some leagues down its left bank, ere they found a safe passage to the opposite one. Similar impediments, the consequence of a peculiarly inclement season, hindered their

progress. So that, wearied more in spirit than in body, Aigline did not reach St. Genevieve till late in the evening of the third day after quitting Roche Blanc. The sight of the gloomy pile recalled to her the feelings with which she had first and last seen it; now they appeared prophetic. "O my poor Lolótte," she exclaimed, inwardly; "if ever I have you again in these arms, never shall you leave them while they have power to hold you!" But, while Aigline said this, she felt how little of permanent comfort it would be in her ability to bestow upon one circumstanced like her sister. She could not doubt what was the individual sentiment which had occasioned Lolótte's despondency; and though she believed herself regretted, happily she imagined not to what degree. But they were now at the gate of St. Genevieve, and another five minutes would place this sister, sick and wasted as she expected to find her, upon her breast.

No such woeful joy awaited Aigline: upon entering the convent parlour, and eagerly enquiring for her sister, the abrupt communication of the abbess struck her as with a thunderbolt; and, when she recovered from the long insensibility into which the unexpected tidings had thrown her, her distracted faculties were a much longer time of acquiring steadiness to attend to the particular circumstances of her sister's disappearance. They were briefly these: —

After the transporting sight of Adhemar de Bourbon, Lolótte's silent dejection, had changed into a wild and restless feverishness of look and manner; her faithful attendant was unhappily confined to her bed with an attack of rheumatism; and during the period of a procession of all the religious communities in the province, to commemorate ancient privilege or blessing, the poor girl had either found means of getting beyond the precincts of the place, and

so fled alone, none knew whither; or been seized, and carried off by some designing wretch.

Suspicion of Victor St. Maur, and of the Chevalier de Bourbon, immediately entered the mind of Thomasine, who sent boldly to the former, through the means of his aunt, equally shocked, and far more interested than she could be, in having his innocence proved. De Bourbon's manner, when he obeyed the daring summons, required no collateral testimony. As amazed and more afflicted than either of them, he instantly took measures for tracing the poor run-away, whose peculiar circumstances of mind and body, rendered it impossible for her to take any means for her own preservation. Two days had elapsed, and no tidings were received of Lolótte.

Aigline's first death-like swoon upon hearing these grievous things, was nearly followed by another, when she was re-

minded that Clarence Willoughby was no longer in Gascony. Her soul had flown like the child to its mother's arms, to his idea for succour and support. All remembrance of love sought, and love rejected — of jealousy on his side, and consequent apprehension on hers — was forgotten: she thought of him, but as the being upon whom her spirit must lean for earthly support, so long as it could suffer wrong, or feel consolation; and now that she was reminded, that he was far away, she seemed abandoned of all.

The shock, the agony, the sudden going out of a last hope, was too much for one so young, and so poorly disciplined: a sort of stupor succeeded to the insane desperation of her first feelings, and not even the awful adjurations of sister Josephine (the aunt of Adhemar,) nor the plainer exhortations of the disabled Thomasine, were of power to re-animate her. How long this alarming numbness of mind might have continued, is difficult

to say, had not tidings of comparative comfort, arrived and roused her.

The second morning after Aigline's arrival at St. Genevieve, the Chevalier de Bourbon, sent to say, that Lolótte was found, and that he was with her, accompanied by one of the court physicians from Nerac.

Poor Lolótte had wandered by herself; thinking only of getting back to her sister, and the objects of her innocent idolatry, whose late presence had heightened it into passionateness. She had gone on, at random, far into the depths of the forest, where stood the hunting-lodge of the noble Gascon, with whom de Bourbon was staying. One of the under rangers found her there, and conveyed her home to his wife. Her delicate flesh, as well as her cloaths, was all torn by the briary undergrowths, among which she had mechanically pursued her way; perhaps imagining they were the thickets of L'étoile: she was exhausted from fatigue

and want of food, having only winter berries to subsist on. Nearly distracted with terror, impatience, and suffering from the rigour of the season, and the want of other shelter than the snow-roofed trees, she could scarcely utter intelligible sounds except the names of her sister and of the Chevalier de Bourbon.

The ranger conjecturing that she might be some unfortunate young creature led astray, and deserted by an attendant of the illustrious person upon whom she called (he thought), for justice, set forth at once for the house where he knew the Vicomte de Limoges was to be found. Adhemar de Bourbon's noble custom of personally attending to the suit of the humblest peasant, wherever he might be, made this bold step a successful one; and luckily confined the distressing tale to fewer breasts.

Pierced at the same instant with grief and joy, what might be his heart's fate afterwards, if he should dare the sight

of Lolótte again, de Bourbon scarcely ventured to ask. Dizzy from the rush of contrary passions, and every pulse throbbing with a mixture of dread and eagerness, he paused only a moment; then resolutely cast himself into the desperate resolution of braving every consequence. He could but be miserable, he thought: and the luxury of seeing himself so beloved, might never again be offered to to him. He would drink deep then, of the delicious cup: — the draught, given by a dying hand, might indeed carry death with it; but it could not convey guilt: — and de Bourbon internally ejaculating a prayer for the strengthening of virtuous resolutions, (as he thought of the joy his appearance would excite in Lolótte) delivered up his soul to emotions of transport.

No sooner did Aigline hear where and how her sister was to be found, than revived suddenly by hope, she hastened along with Josephine, to the forest. The

rules of St. Genevieve were neither strict nor inflexible; and the aunt of Adhemar de Bourbon, on a mission of Christian charity, was absolved from all sin in its mode of performance.

As Aigline entered the first room in the ranger's house, she heard from an adjoining chamber, the low, deep voice of Adhemar de Bourbon, speaking in tones of penetrating tenderness to the object of his solicitude. There was something in that voice, which expressed, like fine music, without the aid of words: she did not hear what he said, but his tone assured her, that the speaker believed himself addressing one, for whom there had been pronounced, no hope. All at once, she recollected, that his message mentioned having a skilful physician in his company: — her knees smote each other; and she would have fallen to the ground, had not Josephine staid her. The hand of death seemed resting upon Aigline's heart, for the moment

or two, in which she paused, to recover and fortify herself: — all the colour passed away from her face: — she bent her head upon her breast; — murmured a short address to Heaven, then looking up, with fixed submission in her countenance — motioned Josephine to lead on.

Advancing into the interior chamber, she beheld Lolótte, half stretched upon a mattress, half supported by the Chevalier. He did not withdraw the support on Aigline's entrance: for, what sentiment could be in man's breast, at such a moment, which he would have feared to testify? His dark cheek, as completely divested of colour as that of Lolótte, whom he continued holding; having just turned his eloquent eyes towards Aigline, and then returned them to the object that absorbed him.

"Lolótte! — my dear, dear sister!" faintly ejaculated Aigline, choaking with tears, as she sunk down apprehensively on

one knee by her low resting-place — "You remember your Aigline?"

At the question and the voice, Lolótte raised herself, as by miracle. Like light shining through some exceedingly white and transparent medium, the transport of Lolótte, brightened, though it could no longer tint, her celestial countenance. She spoke not — but throwing her arms round her sister's neck, burst into a passion of rapturous tears; at first gratifying as a proof of conciousness; and at length terrifying, from their violence and duration. As if assuring herself that it was the real, living Aigline she held, not the dear visionary form, that had so often cheated her in dreams, and sad awaking, she covered her whole person with eager kisses: sometimes holding her lips fixed to her neck, her arms, her hair, her very garments, as though they would fasten there for ever.

Aigline yielded to this mute, this agonizing testimony of her sister's present

joy, and past misery, in the same silent wringing of every feeling. Her tears had little joy in them; and her througing sobs threatened suffocation every breath she drew. Meanwhile, one deep and smothered sigh from Adhemar, yet deeper and more dismal than any sound of sorrow Aigline had ever listened to, intimated what was passing within him; or rather, signified the woeful conclusion with which he had ended the conflicting arguments of distempered passion and sounder reason. Lolótte must die! — why then need he struggle further with the giant passion that would fain break from him and seize its beauteous object! A few short hours, and it would no longer be a question whether Adhemar de Bourbon should give up all claim to mastery of himself; or, forgetting family, reputation, nay, the visible prohibition of Deity, match himself with a creature, to whom the rational soul was denied!

Aigline, as she occasionally noted the

sparkling and saddening of his eyes, defined his feelings, and she looked at him with equal compassion and respect. She feared he blamed himself, and she could not help exclaiming, "God will bless *you*, Chevalier! — O may he forgive us! — my dear, my ill-used sister!" Again she threw her arms round Lolótte; and de Bourbon required no other proof than what her present affliction afforded, that she was innocent of the wish to abandon her sister.

Soothed by this conviction, and grateful for her blessing on himself, he stretched his hand to his aunt, who had hitherto considerately withdrawn to the further end of the chamber, and taken the place of the ranger's wife, whom she had cautiously motioned away.

Josephine advanced: she bent her ear to him, and he whispered the instructions left by the physician: accustomed to minister to the sick, his aunt softly drew back, preparing to act as she was

instructed. Adhemar well remembered what the physician had said to him; and dreaded, therefore, to hear again, that sharp, short, continued cough, which he was told betokened inward inflammation, and which the slightest movement at his first appearance, roused. Lolótte coughed no more: pain also seemed to have suddenly ceased in her, and if she soon appeared feebler than before, the force and restlessness of fever was gone: every moment she became quieter, calmer — easier; — were these changes the effects of the remedies already administered by his medical companion? De Bourbon hardly ventured to impart so blissful an idea to Aigline—yet at last he intimated it; and seizing at the comforter, Aigline devoutly sought to prepare her soul for joy or grief.

As Lólotte's stronger emotions moderated, the most touching expression of timidity, tenderness, and happiness, diffused itself over her countenance, illu-

minating its lucid whiteness, not with the hue of roses, but the light of love. Her eyes only now and then stole a glance at Adhemar de Bourbon, and her hand trembled softly as he more softly held it within his: her other hand clasped that of Aigline: she, still kneeling on the floor, and more profoundly affected by her sister's happiness, than by her situation, was vainly endeavouring to still her vibrating hopes and fears. What indeed, was she to hope for this sister? What wish, what pray for? — Her life granted, would scarcely prove a blessing, since after the present circumstances, Adhemar de Bourbon must be more closely entwined with her dearest recollections, than ever: yet must he be equally incapable of yielding to the spell of her beauty and fondness. And if she died, what opiate could medicine the remorse of Aigline, who falsely called herself criminal, for not having acted as sisterly affection dictated, even though in de-

fiance of parental authority. The anguish of such unfounded self-blame, with none to reprove its irrationality, may be imagined; and whenever Aigline turned her eyes upon her sister's heavy lids, or held some restorative to her erring lip, or pressed her finger on the wan wrist where she sought in vain to find a regular pulse, her own life seemed passing away. But Adhemar looked hope, now and then; and Josephine whispered it; and her heart, rousing again, enabled her to get through the anxious hours.

The Chevalier's keen anxiety had provided the only support to hope, which their melancholy situation afforded; he had secured a second visit from his royal uncle's physician: and in the evening, this skilful person re-appeared.

He considered his patient's pulse and countenance but a moment; listened to what Josephine repeated concerning her, with attention, and such stillness of look, that even Aigline's searching gaze could

not discover what it meant; then withdrew to the outer apartment with the Chevalier. The opinion he then delivered to him, extinguished hope: inflammation, consequently suffering, was over; but mortification was begun, and death was inevitable. As her death might be accelerated by extraordinary emotion, the physician cautioned him against permitting any one to approach her that could not command their emotions, or any one to quit her, whose absence would cause her concern. The Chevalier could not restrain a profound sigh at this last caution: well did he know that there was one beloved person who would not quit her, till life was gone — though his own life, nay, the lives and fortunes of multitudes now trusting to him for their preservation, were to be the forfeit. He dismissed the physician with an embarrassed command to secresy; and staying awhile to conquer his own struggling agony, returned to the chamber he had left.

By this time, serenity almost to sleepiness, was stealing over the angelic features of Lólotte: Aigline, therefore, on the Chevalier's re-entrance, ventured only to question him with her eyes, —Those dark and earnest eyes well-nigh blinded with tears, went to his soul; he wished to answer their piteous questioning with a cheating smile, but even while he attempted it, his heart rent in twain, and sinking his head on his breast, he remained dismally silent. Aigline half uttered a cry: directly after she clasped her hands together, and looked upwards with saintly appeal: the rebellious feeling had lasted only for a moment. She bowed her head again; and repentant tears then trickled over her hands, as she rested her eyes on them.

Lolótte, whom her voice had startled, made a movement as if uneasy on her homely pallet; at the same instant, Aigline and the Chevalier hastened to

adjust her pillow, and when the latter had done so, finding the cheek of Lolótte sunk upon his arm instead of on the bed, he softly seated himself close to her, that he might not withdraw it. Aigline re-took her station on the ground, fondly drawing one of her sister's hands into her own, while she fixed her gaze upon her face. Lolótte lifted her drooping lids for a moment, and looked up at both her dear attendants: the expression of her sweet and innocent countenance was equally full of love and satisfaction as she regarded them alternately: her eyes, however, lingered longest upon the noble aspect of the Chevalier, now bare of all concealment, for his soul could no longer brook any. She then restored her head to the honoured pillow it had momentarily risen from, and as she did so, de Bourbon was sensible to the faint pressure of her lips against his arm: it was a kiss, pure and grateful as that of spotless infancy, yet it ran shivering

through his veins, blazing and extinguishing there, between transport and agony. Aigline, at the same moment, felt an affectionate movement of her sister's hand in hers, and returning the pressure with new-springing hope, watched for some additional proof of life in her sister's heart and frame.

Lolótte, however, was evidently so exhausted by the rapidity, confusion, and blissfulness of her recent feelings, that nature seemed graciously withdrawing her from them, into gradual sleep; her composing features were now but faintly touched with the light of inward joy: her fading smile became fluctuating, like the tremulous beam of some solitary star seen at intervals through gathering mists; and those lively emotions which had hitherto flashed through her transparent cheek, as the Aurora Borealis streams over the heavens, settled finally into whiteness and stillness. Her sleep soon became profound: so profound that it

alarmed Aigline: she looked at the Chevalier, seeking for a re-assuring glance from him, but his eyes were rivetted upon Lólotte; gazing, lost in thought of her, till the actual image was blotted out from before him, by the intensity of the ideal one. There was something awful in the stillness of his face and figure: never had Aigline been so deeply interested for him—never so entirely forgot the prince in the sufferer—never before had she so lamented the perfect impossibility of her sister's attachment being returned. When she asked herself again, what was to be the consequence of all this, her mind fled from the enquiry; endeavouring to rest solely upon the blessed conviction, that at least, Lolótte's happiness had been perfect, from the moment the Chevalier and her sister were re-united to her.

Upon this idea Aigline leaned; and making her silent prayer to Heaven, solely confessions of her own inability to ask what was best for those she prayed

for, she suffered no sound to disturb the repose of the sleeper, or the centered thoughts of her fellow-watcher.

The pitying and considerate Josephine sat at the remotest end of the chamber, to assist when required; but careful not to distract the spirit of Lolótte, by crowding more objects into it, than could be avoided, did not approach nearer. Now and then, she directed her saintly eyes to her nephew, with an expression of Christian satisfaction softened by pity; or fixed them kindly upon Aigline; — then crossed herself; and clasping her rosary to her breast, appeared to pray for them all. Once the Chevalier, startled out of his abstraction by a sudden gust of wind, looked towards his aunt: either the savage blast, or her mournfully habited figure in the gloom of distance and twilight, or the sand running swiftly away from the hour-glass she watched, gave him a thrill of horror, for he shuddered, and hastily withdrew his eyes.

Day was gone, and evening coming on; hollow blasts began to rush through the forest, with that dreariness of sound which is heard among trees when their leaves are dry as in autumn, or their branches quite stripped as they were now in winter. The melancholy monotony of such sounds, affected the spirits of Aigline beyond endurance: and once or twice, for the first time in her life, she was sensible to feverish impatience as louder gusts pealed suddenly over all, threatening to awake her sister. But Lolótte slept on; and Aigline recovered herself.

Every thing in the outer chamber was as still as in that of the sick person; and as hour succeeded to hour, Aigline had only to complain of the kindless elements. The wind rose into storm; the sharp, short hail shower, settled into a continued tempest of sleet and rain: yet as the outward din increased, Lolótte's sleep appeared sweeter and sounder. Often,

during that sleep, had Adhemar de Bourbon gazed at her with sudden wistfulness; and once the nun softly approached, bent silently over the bed for an instant, and returned again. Aigline's eyes were distracted between these different objects of question and interest: every movement of her companions alarmed her; yet she had kept her finger on the pulse of Lolótte, till the sense of feeling was almost benumbed, — and that still beat, though intermittingly, and scarcely perceptibly. It beat once again — and was suspended. Aigline waited breathlessly for the return of the stroke: she pressed her finger harder on the artery; hoped her hand had strayed from the proper point; sought movement — warmth — life again, in vain. She looked up wildly at the Chevalier, to read in his face blessed contradiction of her own convictions — but he had seen her actions, and their effect upon her, and as suddenly pressed his cheek to that of

Lolótte: he gave a mortal shudder, but did not raise his face again.

Aigline needed no more; she flung herself on the body of her sister, calling upon God to pardon and comfort her parents. Josephine hastened forwards, yet to neither of the living sufferers before her could she offer religious consolations as she was accustomed to offer them, and she stood over both for some time in silent sorrow. Adhemar de Bourbon was now standing struggling with those powerful feelings which long held back by his utmost effort, threatened, if once they broke loose, to desolate himself and all around him. He yet held them tightly reined; motioning only, to be left alone. The sound of his stifled grief acted as a chastiser to that of Aigline: her heart, ever prone to pity others more than itself, yearned to reward his late goodness by the consolation he seemed to require. She raised herself suddenly from the body of Lolótte, and

precipitating herself upon the bosom of Josephine, gasped out—"Take me, take me away, while I have strength to bid you."

Even while she spoke, the Chevalier flung himself upon the bed. His movements and countenance, over-informed with life and its sharpest suffering, contrasted with the motionless features of Lolótte, fixed in peace by the hand of death, formed a fearful contrast; Aigline's instant impulse was to throw herself beside them; but, ere she could do so, Josephine had withdrawn her from the chamber.

Merciful to her was the impassioned forgetfulness of the Chevalier! while it left him free to indulge those gusts of anguish which he would have shrunk to remember as having been witnessed by any eye, it afforded her deeper-seated sorrow opportunity for salutary vent, unchecked by the consideration of so increasing his. In the midst of her severest

struggles, her ear caught the sounds of fervent prayer: she turned, and beheld the ranger and his wife, together with the nun and the venerable Godefroi on their knees, imploring happiness for the parted spirit.

At such a moment creeds were forgotten: Aigline saw only fellow-mortals before her, seeking the same God, through the same Mediator; and, as she thought, for the same blessedly-attainable purpose — consolation for the survivors. She sunk on the floor beside them, though remote from the symbols before which they were prostrate; and Heaven rejected not her prayers; for comfort descended into her soul.

Immediately after the loss of a dear relative, pious survivors are generally conscious to a species of unearthly elevation, which bears their spirits up above present affliction. Merciful is the ordination; since in this earnest communion with the divine dispenser of trial and

blessing, they gather strength for after support, when they must fall back to earth.

In this frame of mind Aigline met the slow advance of Adhemar de Bourbon, when after long indulgence of his feelings he appeared from the inner chamber. His look was that of a man risen himself from the dead. Twice did he press his quivering lip upon Aigline's hand, ere he attempted to speak; but utterance wholly failed him: and, with a look that said, "reckon on me for life"—he waved back those that would have detained him, and regardless of storm and darkness and the labyrinths of the forest, broke away at once from observation.

The sight of him had renewed Aigline's sorrow: she disengaged herself from the preventing grasp of the ranger's wife, and flying into the other chamber, threw herself on the dismal bed; there to mingle prayers with lamentations, over the beauteous clay which had lost none

of its mortal coldness, in the long and frantic embrace of Adhemar de Bourbon.

Afraid of trusting himself again, in a scene where his heart had so completely betrayed itself, the Chevalier re-appeared no more: all that he could otherwise perform for the service of Lolótte's family, he did promptly. He had learned the fate of her disastrous legacy; and he took upon himself, therefore, the charges of her honourable interment. Aigline's consolation he trusted to God and his saintly aunt. The political schemes into which he had lately plunged deeper than ever, called for every faculty of his mind: and, although that passionate desire of self-aggrandizement, which had chiefly hurried him on, was quenched by present sorrow, that very sorrow gave a more restless character to his soul, a keener edge to his sensitiveness; aggravating his never-ceasing sense of injury and suffering; and presenting life to him, rifled of the heart's enjoyments, offered

him no compensation, except ambition. He remained at the hunting-lodge only until he learnt that Baron de Roche Blanc had joined the forlorn Aigline at the house of the ranger, where the corse of the once lovely Lolótte still lay; watched with weeping affection by her sister, and the compassionate Josephine. Thence it was now to be removed to the family burial place at the chateau. He staid not to witness the sad procession—he did not even take leave of his aunt. Shrinking from a renewal of what he had suffered, and eager to lose vain regrets in agitations of a stormier character and a gloomier dye, he hastened to meet new confederates on his way homewards, ere he rejoined Clarence Willoughby on the Loire.

CHAP. VI.

Meanwhile Clarence had pursued his journey to Blois, with all the impatience natural to a character ever inclined to dare the knowledge of the greatest evils, rather than suffer one moment of suspense. His own mortification from the change in the queen of England's humour affected him little, in comparison with the anxiety it excited lest his father was a personal sufferer, through the enmity of those that sought to injure him. Aigline's refusal to hear and answer his affection, rendered the idea of wealth and power, for the present, distasteful to him. Yet what contradictory passions ruled him as he thought of her! Sometimes pride and resentment; for he felt like

one cheated into more ardent attachment by a false show of it in her: sometimes hope, that he had taken alarm without sufficient cause, and that her rejection was solely in obedience to the worldly calculations, or blind policy of her mother; then relapsing into desponding doubt, but with more generous tenderness he fervently desired that the character of Victor St. Maur might be far superior to what he feared.

Accompanied by such thoughts, yet still pressing on to his place of destination, our hero sped forward on such horses as the poor accommodations for travelling, in those times, afforded; he had, therefore, ample time for bitter imaginations. And had not the prospect of being soon rejoined by the only friend whose influence could cope with that of Aigline, and from whom he hoped to hear of her, and the poor Lolótte, cheered his darkened mind, dismal, indeed, would have been his progress.

As he rode along, he observed, with concern, the tumultuous state of the provinces lying between the Garronne and the Loire. The spirit of retaliation in the Protestants, roused by some local oppressions, not unfrequently made him find whole districts in a state of revolt. Tumultuous bodies assembled continually; not merely resisting arbitrary violence, but too often taking advantage of their own temporary strength, to visit former sins upon the heads of their adversaries, and show that not only Catholic but Protestant followers of the meek Jesus could disobey his law of love. In the neighbourhood of Etienne, a village in the Agenois, just as evening began to fall, he found himself at once in the midst of a serious affray. A religious procession had been met by a party of armed Hugonots, who, refusing to bend the knee to the host, followed up their refusal by falling upon the Monks and their followers. Assistance had poured

in to both parties. The Catholics were losing ground; several desperately wounded, or driven ignominiously away.

While learning the cause of the bloodshed before him, Clarence threw back his cloak, and proclaiming himself a Protestant officer of the Prince de Condé's, which the badge of service on his arm testified, vehemently protested in his princely master's name, and in his own person, against the outrage. Strife and uproar, however, still raged; men fell; and men fled. Clarence stood over the body of a young man whom he saw drop, after gallant resistance, and evident endeavour to cover the flight of the Monks: his sword put back more than one weapon that would otherwise have wantonly pierced the fallen cavalier. Fairly transported out of himself by indignation at this conduct, his loud and generous rebukes at length took effect on the rioters, or their revenge was satiated, for

one by one they disappeared after the Catholics were put to flight.

In a few minutes not a living creature capable of movement, except Clarence himself, remained on the ground — but several were stretched upon it. He looked round in vain for some one to assist him in succouring such as he might find alive. "Good God, what will become of these poor fellows!" he exclaimed.

"Charitable stranger!" faintly gasped a voice below him; Clarence's eyes were instantaneously directed downwards to the young cavalier, over whom he had thrown himself on leaping from his own horse — they were met by the half opening ones of the person in question. Touched with benevolent joy, he dropt on one knee by his side, inquiring his condition, and proffering assistance. The wounded man re-opened his eyes and fixed them wistfully upon his face, as if trying to read the character there; then

pressing his assisting hand, falteringly desired to be withdrawn some paces from the rest.

"I have not a moment's life to waste," he said, hurryingly; "seek help afterwards for those poor people there, (and he pointed to the distant monastery,) — but now, for God's love, attend to me. I have a boon to beg — you are a Hugonot, I know — but honour and humanity — if you have a father — dare I ask for his sake?"

"I have a dear father!" Clarence exclaimed, impatient lest the speaker should expire ere he knew how to gratify him. "Where can I find yours? What do for you? On the faith of a gentleman and a soldier, I promise to do your bidding faithfully."

The wounded man raised himself from the bath of blood in which he was lying, and stanching the most grievous of his wounds with one hand and a scarf, while with the other he drew forth a small

packet, he first looked eagerly round, then whispered in a voice rendered strong by a powerful motive — "If these papers were to fall into some certain hands, my father's life would pay the penalty — on my dead body, who knows by whom they might be found? Will you undertake to deliver them where I shall direct? As you would purchase the blessing of a dying man, say you will do so?"

The stranger wrung Clarence's hand hard and persuasively as he spoke; the latter, after a single instant's amaze and hesitation, said, "First assure me that they contain nothing prejudicial to the government of this country, or to the honour of the prince whom I serve."

"Nothing, on my soul," was the reply.

Clarence then returned the pressure of the stranger's hand, and gave the promise required: adding to it, at request, the additional one of concealing the whole

transaction from his dearest intimates. What was his astonishment when he was then instructed to repair, at a certain hour, to the royal residence of France, wherever the court might be, and watch the young queen to and fro to chapel; as she passed, still presenting to her sight, yet cautiously, a medal suspended to a cord of woman's hair, which the dying man now took from his neck, and gave with a grievous sigh into Clarence's hand. This memorial, together with the eventful packet itself, Clarence was to deliver but to her, whenever she should appoint him to do so; waiting respectfully for it, after having assured himself that she had seen and noticed the medal.

"Tell her majesty," the stranger said, gasping between every word, and life welling fast from the wound his feeble pressure could no longer staunch — "tell her to commend my dear love to my fair cousin beyond sea, with this her own sweet lock — so long coveted — so sadly

given. Jesu, have mercy on my soul!" With the last abrupt exclamation came a short, tremulous sigh, and the stranger sunk down, evidently to rise no more in his mortal body.

Clarence was roused from the stupor of awe, and concern, and perlexity, in which this sudden termination had fixed him, by the increasing groans of the other wounded, lying a few paces beyond. He started on his feet; remembering their claims on his humanity; and calling out to them that he went to seek help for them, regained his horse, and rode at full speed to the monastery. His errand was soon told, and charitably listened to. Having especially recommended the corse of the young man who had thus breathed his last, to their care for pious interment, he reluctantly denied himself the melancholy satisfaction of staying to assist at it himself, speeding forward on his own anxious business.

At another time, abating the distress-

ing recollection of having seen a fellow-creature perish without fault of his own, Clarence would have felt his spirits exhilarated, and his imagination winged, by the singular adventure in which he was now engaged, and the mystery that surrounded it: even as it was, he did not contemplate it with feelings untinctured by curiosity. The secret interview which he was taught to expect with the young and beautiful queen, whom he had hitherto approached respectfully, and with great distance, revived something of its old romance-shaping expectation in his breast. He blushed the next moment at such excitability: — yet was the feeling an innocent, an allowable one. There was too much youth still in the heart of Clarence, to let him paint any dubious future, in portentous colours: and far, therefore, from imagining vexatious consequences likely to result to himself from his present activity in the

service of a stranger, with the true spirit of that youth he felt buoyant assurance that the performance of a benevolent action, must bring a blessing upon his own concerns.

The apprehension which crossed him, when the dying stranger spoke first of the beautiful queen, had given place to better thoughts of her and him, as he mentioned his "fair cousin beyond sea." The plaited hair to which the model appended (one of a popish saint) was not of an auburn, but a pale amber colour. It could not then be the hair of the royal Mary. He contemplated it by the light of the rising moon, as he rode slowly along, with a mixture of pity and envy: for he thought how gladly he would purchase, even by a similar death, such tears from Aigline as this unhappy lady would most likely shed over the fate of the dear-loved wearer. But soon dismissing the selfish sentiment, he returned to

former musings; weaving a romance, ingenious enough to interest himself, and so lull his own cares for awhile to sleep.

Having decided from the foreign accent with which the stranger had spoken French, that he must be one of Mary's Scottish subjects, Clarence no longer wondered that the person of one, evidently of such quality from his close connection with royalty, should be wholly unknown to him. Recalling his engaging physiognomy, he gave some sincere sighs to his memory: for the circumstances under which the stranger had fallen, were in themselves grievous; and his gallant conduct during the affray, evidently striving to prevent rather than to increase destruction, enhanced his character in the estimation of one, to whom personal bravery was still an object of partial regard.

Having reached Blois, he staid only to make respectful alteration in his disordered dress, ere he proceeded to the

residence of the English ambassador. Upon being admitted to an audience, what was his satisfaction to find that the severe order he had just received, was the consequence of Elizabeth's believing him so vain or imprudent as to have boasted of his gracious reception, when she had expressly commanded him to secrecy. Throckmorton did not choose to say how the information had reached her. It went through his own hands. Immediately after the Chevalier de Bourbon and his friend set forth for their different purposes to the south of the kingdom, Catherine de Medicis began her systematic resolution of ruining the latter in the confidence of her new dupe. A billet, fabricated by her means, was thrown into the window of the ambassador, bidding him caution his countryman, young Willoughby, to discretion — for that, by his idle boasting, the writer of that billet knew he had been four hours in the palace of Westminster on the even-

ing of the 11th of December, accompanied by the Chevalier de Bourbon. Suspecting that the Chevalier de Bourbon's secret visit to London must have had some further aim than that of merely furthering the wishes of a favorite companion, and guessing that they were, from sound policy, concealed even from her ambassador by Elizabeth, Throckmorton deemed it wisest to forward this anonymous accusation to the queen herself, ere he took notice of it to the persons concerned. Elizabeth's first act was to stop all proceedings in Mr. Willoughby's favour; and then send over peremptory orders to his son of the nature before described: privily intimating to her representative the possible consequences of the young man's indiscretion to the French Protestants, and consequently to her relief from the dangerous intrigues of her Catholic subjects in England. She exhorted Throckmorton to rebuke him sharply; nay, bitterly: —

and when he should see the Chevalier de Bourbon in private, admonish him, to confide nothing higher than a love-secret to the prudence of one so light and audacious.

How the writer of the anonymous letter came by their knowledge, Clarence pretended not to guess; confident in his own innocence, with ready truth he offered to disprove the false accusation against himself, either with the sword before the royal presence itself, or by refuting any alleged proof, in the very teeth of his accuser. Satisfied with the ambassador's dry assurance, that no other evil had occurred to Mr. Willoughby from her majesty's displeasure, than the prolongation of his suspense about the hearing, and the chagrin inseparable from knowing his son charged with contemptible vanity of discourse, Clarence felt the most painful of his fears relieved. He besought Sir Nicholas to lose no time in investigating the falsity of his accuser;

and when Throckmorton gravely remarked that an anonymous accuser was not a tangible one, he turned on him with a smile of frank confidence, exclaiming, "Then I am sure, neither her majesty nor her representative will feel justified in admitting such testimony against a plain man's word."

Sir Nicholas smiled in return, and dismissed him.

Clarence withdrew with cheerful confidence; he had promised the obedience Adhemar de Bourbon counselled, and in the terms he counselled; and trusting to his arrival, for further assistance in the present delicate predicament, went to establish himself in the residence appointed for his princely master, and learn such particulars as were necessary to direct him in executing the commission entrusted to him by the dying stranger at Etienne.

His impatience to rid himself of the mysterious errand, was not destined for

immediate gratification. The young queen, in consequence of attendance upon her sick consort, kept her chamber from indisposition in her own person; consequently went not to chapel: so that Clarence, upon false information, fixed himself two or three times in the passages leading from her apartments to the royal chapel, and returned disappointed.

During this period, so irksome to him who watched every moment of it, the Chevalier de Bourbon rejoined the court. The first person he sought was Clarence —for he had a dismal history to tell, and his soul languished for the relief of complaint. From the solitary habits of his life,—for the revolving satellites of the great, are not like kindred, with claims and privileges,—De Bourbon was unaccustomed to think of the painful effects, emotion in him, might produce upon another: when once he was impelled to show what was passing within him, rare as the impulse was, he did it unresistingly.

Faithful now to this habit, he gave way to his pent-up feelings with a violence which laid waste the heart of his friend along with his own.

Clarence could not hear of the death of the innocent creature for whom he felt the tenderest concern, and whom he knew so mournfully endeared to the woman he loved best, without such affliction as a brother would have felt. Lolótte was evidently the victim of a hard and short-sighted policy: her fate in consequence; the Chevalier's unintentional share in it; the fatal termination of her family's pecuniary hopes; but, above all, the desolation of Aigline, and his own inability to give her comfort, nearly crushed the spirit which its own immemediate vexations had only depressed for awhile; and he might be truly said to mourn with his friend — for he did not attempt to calm him.

The Chevalier himself was the first to recover; and suddenly starting away

from the subject he had covenanted with his own heart never to think of without anguish, he enquired the result of his friend's visit to the ambassador. The allegation against Clarence, of course he treated with disdain, as far as it regarded his character for truth and discretion; but as it proved that their secret was known, he became impatient to see and question the ambassador himself; and obscurely remarking upon the evils likely to result from this piece of mischief, he hastened away, leaving Clarence astonished at his friend's alarm, when he was himself nearly certain, that the evil could only prove temporary.

Adhemar de Bourbon's disturbance of mind was increased by his interview with Thockmorton — the latter not merely repeated what has been told, but added, — "I know the duty and policy, of not permitting myself to imagine what motive led the Vicomte de Limoges to the feet of my sovereign lady in London

I allow myself only to warn him against trusting important matters to a green head and inflammable heart. He may do well to inquire also, what purpose carries the Protestant subject of the royal Elizabeth so often to the chapel of the queen of France and Scotland." This hint, followed up by Adhemar's question, brought forth the serious fact, that Throckmorton saw fit to keep an eye upon young Willoughby, and that in consequence he found he had of late frequented the chapel of the young queen.

Amazed and indignant, de Bourbon abruptly took his leave: all his feelings were chafed and roused. When he had quitted Gascony, the woeful and tender scenes he had gone through, were at variance with the perturbed anticipations excited by his approach to places and persons among whom he was so soon to throw for honour and life, dubious of the event; dubious even, of the fairness of the game. Oppressed by sorrow, when

he turned his back upon the country which contained the remains of Lolótte; shrinking from those stormy scenes in which he was about to act, the Chevalier had resolved not to bear either sorrow or dangers singly, but to seek consolation for the one, and assistance through the other, in the faithful bosom of his friend. What then was his vexation and disappointment to find these intentions frustrated,—by his friend's folly perhaps—at all events, by some untoward accident which rendered his conduct suspected by those with whom the Chevalier had to act, and to whom he was bound for Argus-eyed circumspection. For the first time since their acquaintance, when de Bourbon rejoined Clarence and repeated the substance of his interview with Throckmorton, he expressed some humour at that constitutional openness of character which so perpetually laid its possessor open to accusations of imprudent speech, and which would, therefore,

make it very difficult for him to persuade Queen Elizabeth of his innocence in this affair. Clarence had no love for his own faults; and far from defending the one specified, owned that it *was* a fault, since on doubtful occasions, it could render him suspected of a worse one — breach of faith. He could only console himself, he said, that the present mischief fastened on him for awhile, in consequence of his 'unwise reputation,' injured not the friend whose interests were dearer than his own: de Bourbon's dark cheek, instead of flushing at this, lost all its colour from the instant sense of being in a degree, unworthy that generous remark. Clarence naturally imagined his friend's vexation and exertions were solely roused for his sake; and de Bourbon knew, that they were more keenly edged by his own interests. With a sort of instinctive seizure at something to abate this stinging thought, he abruptly turned upon Clarence, exclaiming,—

"I beseech you have prudence. I am told you have been at mass."

"Never!" Clarence exclaimed as instantly ——

"You really have not been there?"

"No, on my soul! — on my word! — I should have said," interrupting his own impetuosity, with graceful scorn of it.

"Yes, your word is at any time sufficient for me," resumed Adhemar, recovering his accustomed dignity of composedness.

"I must have some extraordinary and infamous enemy!" Clarence added, losing in the astonishment and perplexity of such a discovery, all thought of connection between his occasional loiterings in the passage of the royal chapel, with this story of his frequenting mass: "but perhaps evil may bring forth good; and when her majesty, by investigating the charges against me, discovers their falseness, she may be the more likely to balsam the wound with justice and favour."

"How happy, how enviable is your buoyant spirit!" ejaculated the Chevalier, his own spirit sinking into sadness and reverie. At once snatched back to scenes past for ever, he wandered in thought over the first hours he had seen Lolótte, and been ravished with her strange and touching devotedness: thence tearful memory glided to her grave. Sad thought of her, was inseparably associated now with the image of her sister; and so the chain went on, that made him abruptly wake from his long abstraction, with another exclamation to Clarence,—"You will love again—love, and be happy!—a scorned heart is curable—a bereaved one knows no cure!"—He sighed once and again, then resumed—"Yes, shake off a slighted passion as quickly as possible, for to nurse that, is to nurse a man's shame. Be more wary as econd time. But I caution you not to settle your love upon one, that without being a coxcomb, you have some right

to suspect of an inclination for you. — I mean my uncle's fair widow."

Clarence protested against such presumption: adding a few confused words, expressing the contrary purposes, of loving none but Aigline de Venzéles through life, and passing life in trying to conquer that continued affection.

De Bourbon explained the motive of his exhortation. The Duke de Longueville, one of the most illustrious and respected of the Catholic nobles had loved, rather adored the beautiful Maria d'Estouteville from the first hour she appeared at court, but his timid flame burnt inward; and ere he had courage to make it known to himself, she had given her young heart and hand to her cousin the Comte d'Enghien. Since his death Longueville's modest passion kept respectful silence, until other suitor's surrounded her, and then he ventured to let it appear in his eyes and in his humble services: as yet, he presumed not to

plead it openly. Condé openly approved it; and whenever he had an opportunity for doing so, warmly urged his friend's merits. This was the reason why Adhemar now saw fit to lay an interdict upon Clarence's affection for the same object: — deeming it the only way of inclining him to discontinue that amiable intimacy between him and the Countess, which he feared was the secret bar to Longueville's success. De Bourbon was however mistaken; the beautiful Countess was very far from that age of subdued sensibility in which a woman may safely indulge the most romantic friendship with one of the other sex; yet she proved that friendship may subsist in the female breast, without such protection. She regarded Clarence Willoughby with tender gratitude on her husband's account; but still constant to the memory of her husband, wished neither to love, nor to wed again. Clarence strove to make this fact, as evident as it appeared to him;

and de Bourbon, pleased that he considered it so, assured him he would still hope then for the faithful Longueville.—"I have long since," he added, "made up unjust quarrel with my fair aunt. When I aspired to her hand—I confess it was without the sentiment, which not seeing in me, she could not be said to encourage, by refusing to believe my assiduities meant aught beyond the kindness warranted by our relationship. So had you loved her, Willoughby, I should not have thought you had chosen ill—but I rejoice you did not—for if you did, it would vex my uncle—perhaps gall his pride."

"Gall his pride!" repeated Clarence, forgetting himself for an instant—"What! a descendant of the Plantagenets!—but I am a fool and an insolent for saying this,"—and crimsoning over with immediate repentance, he besought Adhemar to forget the impetuous burst.

Adhemar smiled, and dismissed it then from his mind: he recalled it often enough afterwards. Returning to their principal subject of interest, Clarence's affairs in England, they re-discussed them, and the steps needful in consequence, after which they separated.

During his interview with Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Clarence had earnestly intreated him to take the trouble of transmitting (with his justifying statement to the queen) a sum of money to Mr. Willoughby, which must otherwise pass through a slower and less secure medium, and which his father might now require more pressingly than before. The request having been granted, Clarence hastened to swell his moderate harvest at L'étoile, by the private disposal of some jewels which made parts of his ordinary and gala attire. They had been transferred to him by his father; and, as they might have some local value, in addition to their intrinsic worth, he left it in his

option to redeem them at a happier period. Condemning his youthful vanity to the penance of appearing without one sparkling ornament in circles where the fashion of dress was splendid to gorgeousness, he prepared for himself a keener mortification than he had expected. Like many others, Clarence suffered by the past faultiness and present improvement of his character. When he first came into possession of power by his flattering station with the Prince de Condé, and his friendship with the Chevalier, his natural kindliness and vivid sense of his own happiness made him actually squander good offices. All that asked him to make suit for them, were sure to be obliged. Sometimes their conduct made him rejoice at his success, sometimes caused him to regret it. Sometimes the kindness was abused — or the word he pledged forfeited, or the petitioner proved unfit for the place he had attained. In short, Clarence became circumspect through

vexatious experience, in what he asked and for whom he asked: and when he ceased to be so facile, the persons he had once rashly served considered themselves ill used, and behaved accordingly.

Amongst these ingrates, Beaurévoir was foremost; and to lose the present opportunity of humiliating his unguarded companion was impossible. He first ridiculed his poor attempt, as he called Clarence's sudden plainness of attire, at regaining that station of "the glass of fashion and the mold of form"—from which the Chevalier de Bourbon's noble simplicity suiting his graver style of manly beauty, had so completely driven him—then seizing a bitterer scandal, whispered that the disappearance of jewellery from the cap and vest of the young Englishman was part of his queen's order to discontinue wearing those other badges of high birth, armorial bearings. Beaurévoir took good care to give Clarence no opportunity of tracing such reports to

him, upon whom he well knew they would be visited by instant chastisement; but he stimulated some coquets whom Clarence's disregard had piqued, to insinuate to himself the wounding belief of his being disgraced; yet against them, the generous Clarence forbore to use even the privileged weapon of sarcastic and biting pleasantries.

Adhemar de Bourbon, now more deeply engulfed than heretofore in his own momentous concerns, observed not the slight change in his friend's fashion of dress; and Clarence yet too young to endure the imagination of being indebted for pecuniary aid even to his dearest friend or loftiest patron, rejoicing at his inattention to such fopperies, swallowed this his bitterest mortification; consoling himself with the consciousness of having satisfied his conscience, and performed a duty.

Glad of aught that rid him of an anxiety, he heard with joy that the young queen had left her chamber, and was to

attend early service the following morning. As he was dressing himself in haste, to be in time for securing a good station in her passage to the chapel, the Chevalier de Bourbon entered his room with the freedom he was wont, to read him some inspiriting passages from a letter he had just received from his uncle Condé, on the subject of Clarence's clouded favour in England. Condé, to whom the secret of Adhemar's visit there was comparatively of small importance, thought it accidentally betrayed without fault of any one; and though he admitted that Clarence must have an enemy in France, bade him be of good cheer, since it was an anonymous one, and Elizabeth was too noble-minded to listen long to a concealed informer. The pleasure this gracious encouragement afforded him, Clarence vividly expressed — yet with such eager prosecution of his desire to be speedily dressed and out, that in stooping to adjust his shoe-knots, the medal

he had thrust into his breast, upon his friend's entrance, slipped from it and fell upon the ground.

Adhemar de Bourbon mechanically picked it up, and gave it him: he might not have noticed what it was he lifted, had not the trepidation with which Clarence tried to recover it, and the crimson which dyed his face as he restored it to him, fixed his observation. "A woman's gift, doubtless!" he said, with compassionate pleasantry, as his eye glanced on, and away from it; "but I hope not, Ma'mselle de Venzelés. I forget, though, —her hair is black, and she is not Catholic."

Clarence did not utter: he felt like a criminal, and guessed that he looked like a fool. He put up the unlucky medal, with an attempt at carelessness, which a mind less seriously occupied than the Chevalier's must have taken cognizance of. The latter, however, habitually indifferent to matters of gallantry, so that

no criminality were mixed with them, had already dismissed the incident from his thoughts; and, after repeating some previous account of their engagements for the day, withdrew to read and answer memorials.

Candour was so natural to Clarence, that this trifling incident disturbed him exceedingly; making him see how necessary it is, for the man who considers a promise sacred, (which all men of honour do), to consider well before he gives one. Resolving to rid himself as speedily as possible of any concern, in a business which he could not communicate to his dearest friend, he proceeded to the royal chapel, and stationed himself as directed.

On the queen's approach, he took a lesson from his late mischance, suffering the heavy medal to fall, as if by accident, at her feet. At the sound it made, the beautiful Mary naturally directed her eye downward, and seeing the medal and

plaited hair, changed colour, throwing a glance of alarm over his figure. That trembling glance seemed to enquire whether the person that dropt this memorial could really be the Protestant Willoughby with whom her eye was familiar? Recollecting herself, she passed on. No other sign of recognition was afforded him: yet determined not to be left burthened with a vexatious secret, Clarence resolutely remained walking to and fro in the passages, until matins were over, and the queen on her way back to the royal apartments. She passed him this time, as she did others; but though she looked not towards him, the Comtesse d'Enghien, who bore her train, purposely let it fall upon the ground; and, as Clarence precipitated himself on one knee to assist in recovering it, she managed to ask if he had aught to say from the owner of the medal, and to learn that he had papers to deliver from him. "Be here then at midnight," she whispered; and waiting

not reply, gathered up the robe and moved on.

At the hour appointed Clarence was on the same spot: with what feelings may be imagined by those who either know from its present glow, or by its remembrance, the vivacity of youth's interest in all that stimulates expectation, or awakens awe. A sad and solemn interview with the most beautiful of queens, upon a mysterious business, amid the gloom of shrines and aisles, had something too romantic in it not to indemnify one enamoured from boyhood of "the wonderful, the wild," for every future consequence. Clarence, therefore, waited impatiently for the moment he expected. That moment came: as he stood in the passage, the door near which he loitered opened cautiously from within, and a fair hand, extended from the long foldings of a veil, beckoned him in. He entered, and found himself by the side of the Comtesse d'Enghien and the king's

confessor, in the presence of Mary herself.

Satisfied with being found guarded by a man of God, and a woman of unspotted fame, the young queen assumed no greater degree of majesty than was common to her graceful, almost virgin manner; but motioning Clarence forward, withdrew a little aside with him, questioning him upon his possession of a medal belonging to a trusty friend and servant of her own. At Clarence's plain narration of his meeting with the person in question, the manner of the stranger's death, and the message he had charged him with to the lady beyond sea, the tender-hearted Mary shed tears; still, however, carefully guarding the secret of her servant's name and quality, while eyeing her companion at intervals with a mixed expression of countenance which he had no key to explain. She received the medal and the packet with great sensibility: the seals of the latter she had no cause to examine,

after such proof of honour as the bearer's conduct afforded; and assuring him he had done her most signal service by preventing probable calamity to one of her truest friends, she bade him demand any grace for himself in her power to bestow now, or hereafter; reminding him, that his fortunes even in England might depend upon her gratitude.

Clarence, somewhat boldly, yet he managed to do it respectfully and gallantly, begged permission to think of no queen, save the queen of France, upon French ground; protesting, that to her, he as a subject of England could have no selfish suit to prefer.

Mary's was a generosity to be piqued by delicacy and nobleness; and she pressed favour on him. So repeatedly, so persuasively did she press it, that the wild mountain heart was re-created in a breast now almost tutored into Parisian disbelief of warm impulses in ermined bosoms. A rash, and daring, and daz-

zling hope glanced through his mind: it coloured his cheek; it shortened his respiration while it lasted. But he quenched it in soberer thoughts, and drew back into silent respect.

Mary had noticed his emotion: with the impatience of a royal mind, conscious of gracious purpose, and with that bewitching softness of look and speech which she could neither will to them nor from them, she won him to tell her what fancy so disturbed his complexion and his voice. She asked him if there were any thing he would ask for a friend, if nothing for himself? He answered, "Nothing."

"Had he nothing to wish then for a friend?"

Clarence owned he *had* a wish for the Chevalier de Bourbon, the friend of his soul: and, thus urged, thus wrung by the softest hand, his heart yielded its secret.

Mary started at so hardy an avowal,

since she was now obliged to register it as a petition. The Vicomte de Limoges admitted into the list of princes! — that Adhemar, displeasing to her uncles, and obnoxious to the Catholics! She paused; thought of her influence with her consort, and his share in the matter young Willoughby had just snatched from ruin for them. Then clearing her countenance, told him she loved the zealous friend, and would consider further what she had indiscreetly tempted him to ask; and so bade him good night. The Comtesse d'Enghien echoed the good night cheeringly.

Clarence then rose from the kneeling position in which he had replied to the queen's questions, bowed low to her and her two companions, and so withdrew from the chapel.

His irksome charge was now got rid of, but not a particle of the curiosity it excited satisfied. What the young queen's connexion with the bearer of

those papers could have been, he was puzzled to imagine: honourable it must be; since she brought her husband's confessor to witness her interview with him to whom they were entrusted. Speculation might be infinite, but must be useless: Clarence had other occupation for his thoughts; and one most blissful, the astonishing hope of procuring for his friend what, hitherto, all his noble kindred had attempted in vain. Transported with the mere possibility of this, he trod on air; till hope, kindling into certainty, gave him for the short period of such intoxication, a full compensation for all the vexations he had suffered from his adventure.

CHAP. VII.

WHILE Clarence continued allaying with this generous hope the pain of so many disappointments and anxieties as he was yet labouring under — for he could not banish uneasy thought of his father — deceit and malice were busy with his fate. The queen mother was distilling, drop by drop, the poison of suspicion upon the diseased heart of Adhemar de Bourbon. De Bourbon's political tie with her, had obliged him to the disagreeable duty of telling what had occurred in England on the subject of his incognito visit there. Catherine feigned surprize — disturbance — painful doubt of his friend's discretion, and then complete

reliance on him. For when Adhemar urged, as a proof that his friend was calumniated, the utter falsehood that had been told of his attending mass, which Clarence unhesitatingly denied, she expressed perfect conviction. In subsequent interviews, however, she spoke with more reserve on the subject; intreating her ally, to be *over* wary, when such a secret as theirs was at stake, and not confide a word of it to one so young and volatile. Then, as if in mere gladness of heart, remarked how fortunately Clarence's passion for his friend's society had declined to more temperate seeking, since had he followed him like his shadow, as he was wont to do, it would have been difficult to have kept him from conjecturing something of what was in agitation. This idea had never occurred to Adhemar, so relieved had he been by Clarence's unsuspiciousness, from the necessity of inventing reasons for affecting solitude. The remark struck at present, without

wounding, the heart she aimed at: it rested, however, and in time sunk deeper — sunk to that heart's core.

Catherine followed up her blow by after sallies, uttered in seeming sportive good humour, upon the enthusiasm which caught fire at any thing extraordinary: noting Clarence's rhapsodies upon the conduct of the Prince de Condé; his avowed reverence of the sage Coligny; and his late fashion of going about like them, in a sort of mourning for public calamities, by discarding all ornament from his habiliments.

The Chevalier would have revolted from a direct attack upon his friend's integrity, had she ventured to make it; but having studied her auditor well, the deceitful Italian knew what advantage was to be drawn from his extravagant craving for exclusive devotedness; and that to unsettle his belief in Clarence's preferring, adoring friendship, would be to destroy his trust in his virtues. Such

an apprehension once created, increased by feeding on. The morbid state in which late events placed de Bourbon's mind, left him without the energy necessary to face, and either conquer or submit to new evils. In his anxiety to convince himself, while convincing the queen-mother of his friend's unaltered character, he entered more minutely than was his custom into the subject of Clarence's private history. Clarence's disappointment at Roche Blanc, and his admirable resignation of the recompensing affection which appeared to tempt him from the Comtesse d'Enghien, were naturally adduced as instances of his stability. Catherine playfully refused to believe in the last instance. She persisted in this refusal, until de Bourbon called it obstinate incredulity and looked offended: she was then forced to defend herself (she averred); and first apologizing for so venial a fault in a susceptible young man, as gratitude to a beautiful

woman, she went on to say that she knew Willoughby met the Comtesse in private, where none were likely to seek him, — in the chapel of the young queen. She offered to call in one of her people who had seen him issue thence at midnight, and heard the Comtesse's voice from within, wishing him good night. This person appeared: his evidence was positive; and he added to it, that he had twice before crossed Mr. Willoughby in the passage leading direct to the chapel. Catherine's spies never slumbered; and her hand was never slack to reward their vigilance.

So glaring a proof of insincerity in his friend, de Bourbon believed shocked him more than the unfriendly concealment itself: — why was it necessary?

Catherine pleaded an excuse; affecting great charity for youthful errors. The Comtesse's difference of religion, she said, opposed their union: and hoping to convert him, and fearing his friend's

counter-influence, *she* might have urged him to secrecy. He would naturally be loth, also, to act at once in open opposition to his patron's wishes. These *were* excuses: she admitted, however, unwillingly, that they proved his friend regarded him less devotedly than he had done twelve months before, when their friendship was newer. But it was the natural course of such hearts as began the race of life too ardently, to slacken more in their progress than such as went slower from the first. Adhemar sighed *his* shattered heart nearly in twain: then suddenly recollecting the English ambassador's corroborating testimony, rose to seek Clarence, and charge him with his unfaithfulness. The queen-mother again interposed. She represented the certain effect of his friend's seeming truth and vehement protestations; she instanced their power on the two occasions which had obviously deceived him they were meant to blind. She still

styled the fault a venial one; prayed him only to watch the offender narrowly, without betraying his suspicion; and then manfully cast him from his soul, or freely hold him there, as after observation and later explanation might warrant. In fact, she wrought so skilfully upon the Chevalier, and seemed so amiably desirous to shield him from his own generous self, which hurried him on to the deceiver's toils, that she made him promise to take no important step in the business, such as taxing Willoughby with his offence, until he had consulted her cooler judgment.

Adhemar, in fact, was not himself — love and regret had previously mastered him: — for Lolótte in her grave, hurried there by love for him, was an image he no longer sought to avert his eyes from. In this state a new blow fell upon him, and found him without strength to resist it. Divided between sudden resentment and yearning affection; between the

most perfect confidence in faith and friendship man had ever awakened him to; distracted between that and former habits of distrust, he knew not, of himself, what course to take. But there was one by to prompt him; and her counsels were to be his load-star. His thoughts meanwhile, agitated by a single idea, moved to and fro like restless waves, finding nor pause nor light. When he next saw Clarence, he met him with restraint and inward agony. These increased upon him at every interview; till their companionship became so painful to him, that he took refuge in solitary readings and in public business.

So implicit was Clarence's confidence in what he loved—so fearless of being misunderstood or misrepresented when he deserved it not, that, in spite of this sad estrangement, which would have abated confidence in a man more experienced, he went on, sure of Adhemar's affection, attributing his singularly-chan-

ged habits to any thing but the right cause. The countenance and conversation of his friend, were certainly deepening every day into a darker hue: at times their gloom gave place to sudden storms of irritation and avowed disgust of life, almost affrighting by their violence. Clarence sought a reason for these in the Chevalier's impatience at the wrong conduct of those for whom he was acting, who by harsh, nay wanton acts of retaliation, (such as Clarence had himself witnessed,) furnished arguments to their oppressors.

He believed him unhappily displeased with his uncle Condé's line of conduct; goaded by apprehension of so losing the object he coveted: and he judged by his own heart, that he mourned to agony the fate of Lolótte, and blushed to acknowledge it. Upon the first of these subjects Clarence often made occasions of urging the arguments calculated to dissipate vexation; and, in doing so,

unavoidably added fuel to fire. With perverted understanding, Adhemar listened to his pleadings on the side of Condé's generous and discerning policy; construing each eulogium upon his uncle into condemnation of his own opinions. On the subject of the legitimating act, Clarence forbore to speak; he feared to betray his hopes ere they were embodied in actual certainty; and when he would have drawn his friend's sorrow for Lolótte into salutary indulgence, by pouring forth his own weaker regret about Aigline, he was warned by the shuddering repulse of Adhemar, never to touch subjects of love again: he guessed not that such, revived the idea of his supposed apostacy.

"Good God!" he one day exclaimed, "*is* ours friendship, Adhemar?—if it be, why do you thus devour your griefs alone?"

"I trust them to no other man!" was the Chevalier's reply: "let that content

you;" and afraid of looking again upon the open brow, and the fixed eyes, which spoke to him only of truth and tenderness, he choaked a convulsing sigh, and passed from him.

"It is!—it must be Lolótte, for whom he thus abandons his noble self!" Clarence exclaimed, gazing after his agitated steps. "Wretch that I am, to aggravate his sufferings by my childish discontents!—Patience, foolish Clarence, and he will return to himself and thee!"

In conformity with this resolution, Clarence observed his friend's varying looks with silent commiseration and undoubting confidence: meanwhile, pushing his daring suit more vigorously with the young queen: the grace he sought was one of the first magnitude; and when he had named it he marvelled at his own audacity,—much more did he wonder at its being actually taken into consideration. Mary pledged herself to obtain it upon certain conditions: such as the

Chevalier's embracing the Catholic faith, or at least outwardly conforming to it; or binding himself to let the king dispose of his hand in marriage, and direct the religious education of his children. These propositions, separately made, and urged through the medium of the only person trusted by the young queen in the affair, obliged Clarence to proceed in a species of correspondence with the Comtesse d'Enghien, although not one word of it related to their own individual concerns. He was careful, however, to keep his word to the Chevalier, using his many opportunities of public conversation with her, for the purpose of furthering the timid passion of the Duke de Longueville. About this time a circumstance occurred which drew Adhemar to the verge of explanation.

A celebrated Hugonot teacher was to perform the service of the Reformed privately, in the house of Coligny, and de Bourbon, purposing to attend there, asked

Clarence if he chose to accompany him. Clarence gladly accepted the invitation, adding something about the livelier nature of religious impressions when the heart was not quite at ease.

"I rejoice to hear you say this of our religion," observed Adhemar, turning aside to conceal his further agitation; "for I am still haunted with the rumour that you frequent the Royal Chapel, and are turning Catholic; therefore, if you ever resort there, *I* should rather suspect you of going to gaze on my fair aunt."

"You don't suspect that!" exclaimed Clarence, crimsoning at first with apprehension for the stranger's secret, but almost instantly relieved by the turn given to his stolen visits. "After the pledge I gave you, Adhemar — nay, after what I told you of my disappointed hopes in another quarter, you can never suspect me of such insincerity, — ingratitude to my prince I will put out of the question."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Chevalier, in a tone of biting irony. "I may now contradict the slander of your having ever entered that temple of idols."

Clarence's face suffused again, both with indignation and shame; and he hesitated, ere his thoughts could frame an evasive sentence, or decide whether it were part of his enforced duty to utter one. Abruptly determining upon bold fidelity to his secret, he said at once, "I do not deny that I *have* entered the queen's chapel; but never when mass was performing. I am not a little vexed, Adhemar, that tale-bearers and eves-droppers should make it necessary for me to give you my word, that I neither went thither to worship an image of stone, nor one of flesh and blood."

Stung by his friend's obvious doubt of his honesty, and perhaps the more irritable from vexation at himself for having heedlessly got entangled in another person's

mysteries, Clarence drew proudly up, and bit his lip; but, recollecting himself, he smoothed his look, inquiring in a milder tone, who was the Chevalier's informant?

"You are in one of your towering passions," de Bourbon said, with a calm voice, yet jaundiced cheek; "and a poor chatterer's name would not be safe with you, — in truth it is of little consequence."

"Of little consequence!" repeated Clarence vehemently, passionately, almost reproachfully; "what! when my reputation for loyalty to my God, and to my friend! — My grateful conformity to the Prince de Condé's wish is called in question! — Of little consequence! when the accusation proves that I am dogged and watched through the very hours of night!"

De Bourbon started at this confirmation: the last expression let in broader light, as he supposed, upon his friend's

character: it supported the testimony of Catharine's witness.

"Come, come, Willoughby!" he said, with stern composure; for growing conviction rendered him frightfully calm; "this heat rather makes against your cause. He that need not care for being watched only laughs at the watchers. Be honest, now,—tell me at once that you love my fair kinswoman, in return for her delicate wooing, and I will make your peace with my uncle; but do not poorly endeavour to conceal from us what your very success at last must betray. On my life, I suspect you are unwisely ashamed of owning that a disappointment from one woman, is easier cured, by the favour of another, than your romantic imagination liked formerly to believe!"

"The interpretation is most kind!" exclaimed Clarence, returning at once to confidence and contrition; "I am

ashamed of my intemperance; and I desist from asking——No!" he abruptly exclaimed, magnanimously interrupting himself, "I will not claim a merit I do not deserve. At present I am afraid to push the inquiry of who has tried to do me this ill-office with you. Time will prove my sincerity on all points, I hope, and enable me to explain *why* I cannot *demand* the name of my enemy. Under present circumstances, I can but repeat most solemnly, that so far from wishing to obtain the Comtesse d'Enghien's particular affection, ever since you mentioned the Duke de Longueville to me, I have introduced the subject of his merits whenever I could do so without impertinence: and, on my soul, I believe she cares for me simply as an object of kindly interest!—Are you satisfied?"

"I ought to be so," was Adhemar's reply.

Clarence looked at him as though he would have looked into his soul: he then

started away, and took one or two turns up and down the room. He saw the imprudence of pressing the inquiry he would have urged, but for the apprehension of hazarding the unknown secret he was connected with so innocently and unfortunately, and he still looked to the triumphant consummation of procuring his friend the object of his long desire.

"Adhemar," he said, at length, "deal with me as I would deal with you in my case: rely on my word; — judge me by my future conduct."

"I *will* judge you by your future conduct," de Bourbon answered, stretching out his hand to him: the softer-hearted and more impetuous Clarence flung himself upon the breast of his friend; the latter involuntarily returned that tight grasp by a momentary pressure, then disengaging himself, though with a relenting smile, broke away, as if to recover from such unwonted disorder.

By one of those accidents, common in

life, which are perhaps ordained to try our characters, when we think they occur to justify our habitual weaknesses, Adhemar encountered the page of his fair kinswoman on the staircase, which led straight to Clarence's quarter of their mutual residence. The youth, in his haste and confusion, dropt a billet from the hand with which he lifted his hat; de Bourbon's quick glance caught the name on the cover, and recognized the hand-writing. He turned sternly away: the fact was ascertained. Clarence, in defiance of his solemn assertions, was carrying on a correspondence with the Comtesse d'Enghien. Too much irritated by this seeming insincerity, to ask himself by what right *he* received the concealment of a secret, as a proof of changed affection, he exclaimed, in bitterness of spirit, "The fire has, indeed, blazed out! — be it so, Clarence; — I can return to that miserable solitude of the soul from which your flatteries drew me! — Fool that I was, ever to be-

lieve stability and truth were to be found on earth!"

In some natures, the fall from perfect confidence to an absolute chaos of opinion upon the same subject, is rapid beyond calculation. De Bourbon's was this nature: for when attachment declined from idolatry, he doubted its continuance. He considered not how graciously Providence has ordained tenderness to supply the place of adoration, when we are forced to find the objects of our misdirected worship, frail and mortal like ourselves!

While he was gnawing on such poisonous thoughts, Clarence was glowing with expectation and friendly pleasure. The unlucky billet—banishing every unpleasant remembrance—informed him that an entertainment, about to take place at court, had a kinder purpose than mere amusement. The young queen, wishing to revive the memory of Adhemar de Bourbon's military talents and successes, ere she pressed on her husband

the arguments which might render the security of his gratitude an act of policy, had issued a command for what she styled her Ball of Heroes; at which only military men were to appear, and precedence be given, not according to ordinary heraldic forms, but according to the number of campaigns in which the inferior officers had served, and the number of victories gained by commanders.

In this martial fête, he that at the age of sixteen achieved the honor of knighthood, and since then sustained his character for chivalric bravery, was peculiarly distinguished. Clarence had made only two campaigns; but this he regretted not, so that his friend shone one of the brightest stars of that night's worship. Those lighter parts of their armour, which the male half of the company were obliged to wear, in compliment to the queen, and so give due character to her pageant, ennobled their dress: few of them ever looked so well before; for the

consciousness of high desert, and just estimation, animated many a brave breast. To none was either the fashion or the feeling, more becoming than to Adhemar de Bourbon: his white and carnation habit bore gracefully the gilding of his breast-plate, and the sparkling of his jewelled sword. The dark glow of his complexion, heightened by pleasurable emotion, set off the delicate splendour of such a habit; and if his mien were less composed than ordinary, that circumstance only enhanced the interest of his appearance. To many an admiring woman's glance, not

> "The poet's incarnation of his God,
> In all his marble-sculptured beauty,"

could look more god-like. De Bourbon's appearance on this night reminded Clarence of his air and countenance when they were first seen by poor Lolótte. But Lolótte's eyes were closed, never to open on that form again; while other

eyes, dearer than her's to Clarence's remembrance, were too probably weeping still — perhaps at this moment weeping, over her grave! Such painful fancies nearly disenchanted the whole scene; they were, however, yielded to only a moment. Clarence had learned to command the current of thought and feeling upon some occasions; and this evening he wished to enjoy. He was not disappointed: the young queen's felicitous arrangements made honor to the Chevalier indispensable; till, by degrees, that unsteadiness of fire and colour, which had marked Adhemar's look at entering, fixed into a genial light and a complacent glow.

Clarence partook his friend's gratification too sincerely not to increase it by the vividness of his looks and occasional whispers; and at supper, when a band of musicians, habited as minstrels, sang alternately to their harps the fame of the heroes present, matching them with the

renown of heroes gone, as a stanza devoted to the name of the Chevalier de Bourbon, compared him with the great and irreproachable Bayard, Clarence's eyes fell, but his complexion suffused so expressively, and every feature quivered with such delightful emotion, that de Bourbon's eyes were caught and fixed by it. This emotion could have but one source —joy in his triumph. Was he then still dear to Clarence? — were all those things deceptive spells that had evidenced otherwise? Adhemar unwillingly remembered his rencontre with Comtesse d'Enghien's page, and the popish medal held by a lock of hair as light as hers :— these things he had seen with his own eyes, consequently could not be deceived. Yet even so, he thought with momentary leniency, were they not pardonable? Clarence might be more susceptible of tender fancies, or of vanity, than he had hitherto imagined him; and one or the other, might at first have entangled him

in a connection he might now sincerely intend to break, yet could not with honor confess to a third person; if so, weakness was not deliberate deception; and if Adhemar would have patience, and curb accidental alarms, he might be recompensed by seeing his friend return to him with his whole heart. Had they been alone, or even near each other, he might have uttered this: but situated as they were, he could only beam upon him from a distant quarter of the table at which they sat, that full light of soul which leaves so little for speech.

Upon rising from the banquet, Clarence, who had designedly avoided more than the conversation of a moment with the Comtesse d'Enghien as they repassed each other during the ball, found himself invited to her side by a soft movement of her hand; it would have been uncourteous to refuse: and though loth to cause an instant's pang to the brave and virtuous Longueville, who

was standing pensively at a distance, he obeyed the summons. There were other eyes however besides those of Longueville that watched Clarence's rumoured favor with the lovely widow: the Comte de Mirecourt, a near relation of the Guises, an arrogant turbulent young man, was one of the pretenders to her hand; her cold avoidance only rendered his passion more determined, from its piquing his pride; and when he suspected himself of being rivalled by the man whom he was pleased to style an obscure adventurer, his wrath amounted to fury. Equally enraged at Clarence for his presumption, and at Adhemar de Bourbon, whose example must have taught the Comtesse so to forget herself, he had lain in wait for an opportunity through the whole evening, of insulting one or both of them: the blood of either offender would have been sweet to him. He now stood observing the many and charming expressions which passed and

repassed over the Comtesse's amiable features, mirrored as each seemed to be in Clarence's earnest eyes, till the deadliest resentment took possession of him, and he hurried away to seek the Chevalier de Bourbon and fasten a quarrel on him. De Bourbon was quitting the ball, magnanimously resolving not to remain as a spy upon his friend's conduct:—absorbed in his own relenting thoughts, he either saw not, or cared not to notice the rudeness with which this person crossed and recrossed him in his passage to the entrance, and passing through it he left him, baffled and furious. Mirecourt now strode back to his former station:—the conference between Clarence and his fair companion was ending; for the Comtesse herself was beginning to feel sufficiently interested in the modest passion of the Duke de Longueville to avoid giving him pain; and having executed the commission of kindly encouragement entrusted to her by the royal Mary,

smilingly bowed to Clarence, and coldly bending to Mirecourt, glided away.

This distinction in her manner, dropped the last spark upon the accumulated mortifications of Mirecourt. Having joined the French army on the termination of the last campaign, he had one of the lowest stations in the present gala; his young competitor ranked higher; consequently he was doomed to the bitterness of seeing a foreigner of doubtful rank take precedence of him in place as in love. Drunk with passion, and careless how, or upon whom he wreaked it, Mirecourt rushed back to the lower end of the saloon; he darted like a hawk to secure the entrance, when he perceived Clarence leisurely directing his course that way in the midst of some fellow-officers.

When Clarence drew nigh, he had planted himself in the door-way: the extension of his arms, and the deriding expression of his countenance, denoted his intention to bar the latter's progress.

"Your excellency must have the goodness to give me way," he said, somewhat proudly, for he had marked with extreme indignation while engaged with the Comtesse, Mirecourt's insolent attempts to chafe De Bourbon.

"After I have taken it myself," was the answer. "Do you pretend to go before a son of Lorraine?"

"Here I certainly do, by favor of her majesty," was Clarence's rash reply; "and in the field, I hope ever, by favor of this good arm!"

"You shall account for this!" exclaimed Mirecourt, nearly choked with rage, and looking round on the women, whose presence enforced peace, as though he would have annihilated them. "My lord," he added, calling upon the grave director of court ceremonials, "the order extends only to the ball and banquet room; it ceases at the door?"

"At the gate of the palace," was the tranquil answer. Ere this was uttered,

the Comtesse d'Enghien, thinking to prevent dangerous altercation, too hastily put herself forward, and giving her hand to Clarence, bade him lead her into the gallery, where her pages waited to light her to her own apartments.

To pass before a lady was impossible; and quivering in every limb with inward fury, the fierce Mirecourt suffered Clarence to lead her into the passage. He followed however closely, his head turning more and more with frantic jealousy.

As the Comtesse stood a moment while one of the pages trimmed his torch, he fixed his eyes fiercely upon Clarence, exclaiming aloud to one of his companions, "It sorts well with the noblest and fairest lady in France, to consort thus with the servant of one proud kinsman and the sycophant of another! And what must he be, that condescends to flatter yon base-born pretender?" and he actually pointed to the

figure of the Chevalier de Bourbon, who detained by some acquaintance, was seen through the vista of passages conversing in the entrance hall.

Had Clarence obeyed a first impulse, Mirecourt would have been struck to the earth on the instant; but the terrified grasp of the Comtesse, who was leaning on his arm, kept his senses together. He could not however deny himself the gratification of saying, in a voice that shook from the strength of its curb, "Means he the Vicomte de Limoges? Truly, if the Bourbon blood had not divine alchymy in it, there is a portion in his veins base enough."

"Speak you thus of the blood of Lorraine?" cried Mirecourt, losing his reason at once, and striking at him with his undrawn sword.

Some laughed at this besotted acknowledgement of family disgrace; but the Comtesse shrieked, and fell half fainting from the arm of Clarence upon that of

de Longueville, who had flown at her voice to the scene of contest. Clarence softly strove to disengage himself from both; hastily demanding the forbearance of Mirecourt until they could remove to a fit place for deciding their quarrel. The latter heard him not, or attended not; heaped on him the names of coward, impostor, slave — completing the outrage by seizing the collar of his habit.

"Bear witness, gentlemen," exclaimed Clarence, tearing himself back from the gripe, with a force which rent his collar in twain, and grasping his sword, "that violence forces me to this! — the presence of these else — the sacredness of the place — " he spoke the reverential language of his times when thus mentioning women, and the residence of a queen: he could articulate no more; for his own indignation and his antagonist's fury rendered him breathless.

The clash, the clamour, the cries brought forth some persons of authority

from the ball room; but ere their words could be heard, Clarence had disarmed and overthrown his adversary. He was in the act of returning the sword he had wrested from him; and doing so, with a stern admonition to use it in juster quarrels, when both that and his own weapon were seized by the officers of the palace, and the wearers themselves arrested for contumacious disregard of royal precincts. Both were hurried away before Adhemar de Bourbon heard of the affray, and hastened back from the portal to learn how he could interpose successfully.

With a generosity which advanced his cause more in five minutes than had been done by five years of humble assiduities, the Duke de Longueville came forward to testify before the fair object of contention, Clarence Willoughby's forbearance.

De Bourbon having made himself master of the particulars, and learned that Clarence suffered through excess of zeal

for his honor, hastened away to make representations where he was told they were to be proffered.

The nobleman, whose office it was to regulate the decorums of the palace, and punish offences against them, was naturally a creature of the Guises; little inclined therefore to show any favor to one who had given mortal offence to one of their race. He seized the excuse of a slight scratch from Clarence Willoughby's sword upon the cheek of Mirecourt, to condemn the former to the most rigorous confinement, until the nature of the wound was ascertained: meanwhile neither friend nor acquaintance were to be admitted to him.

De Bourbon was indignant at this partiality, vainly indignant; — he felt more than ever the mockery of his birth, which like the part of a player-king, gave him the pomp and habiliments of a prince without the power. He ran to the queen-mother, demanding her inter-

ference. She mediated, she said, and unsuccessfully; feigning the liveliest admiration of Clarence's indiscreet zeal in the protection of his friend's name from insult. She was, in reality, quiescent; while the proud relatives of the real culprit showed the most determined resolution of disgracing the Prince de Condé, if possible, in the person of his officer.

Complaisant evidence in favor of the Comte de Mirecourt was soon at his service from many a party-minion; and even the Chevalier began to be alarmed at the turn the business might take, and thought seriously of dispatching information of it to his uncle at Meaux, when the young queen, insisting upon her right to decide in a case which had occurred on her particular ground, issued a clement order for the release of both offenders. Both were sentenced to the same banishment from court for a certain term; and both interdicted from wearing swords

in the royal presence for a yet longer period.

The command was softened to the Comte de Mirecourt, by his receiving an honorary errand to Brussels: but though indulgent, it was so peremptory to Clarence, that he had not time to exchange greetings with his friend Adhemar ere he was obliged to take horse for Meaux, whither he thought it best to repair during his exile. He was, however, followed and overtaken by a few cordial lines from Adhemar, enclosing a letter from Mr. Willoughby, just arrived, and promising to join him and the prince in a few days.

Clarence was not greatly disturbed by what had passed between him and the Comte de Mirecourt: the young queen's clemency proved that it had not made her his enemy, and he had nothing but generous imprudence with which to reproach himself. The unwonted glow of

Adhemar's note had infused a kindly warmth through his heart; and in this mood, he was fortified against the possible contents of his father's letter.

The letter was indeed not animated, —yet it was consolatory; dwelling lightly on the distress occasioned to the writer by the queen of England's wrath at his son's imagined boasting; beseeching him to be on his guard against the machinations of enemies, for such he must have; and, perhaps, some one in the house of his noble patron, who might violate the sacredness of a seal, to put himself in possession of important facts. Mr. Willoughby noticed the large sum of money Clarence had transmitted to him, with affectionate chiding, suspecting how it had been so increased; concealing from him still, with unwise tenderness, the alarming coldness of Elizabeth's ministers to their interests; and trying to cheat him into the security he no longer felt himself.

Clarence was in the mood of hope and cheerfulness; and at his father's fond augury of future happiness for him, he not only ventured to believe that Elizabeth's anger, for want of just fuel, must die away, and his affairs be then speedily concluded; but that it was reserved for him to comfort and bless Aigline de Venzéles.

How differently do we behold the same facts under different lights of humour! How widely different is the inference we draw from them! Clarence, in a state of happily-excited feeling, believing his friend quite reconciled to him, and his hope for that friend in the road to accomplishment, now considered the suspension of his English prospects as a vexation not a calamity; and the contradictory conduct of Aigline, rather as a proof that her heart was at variance with her supposed duty, than as an assurance that she preferred another. He had indeed heard that Victor St. Maur was

gone to push his fortune at a German court, where some connection invited him; and this circumstance seemed to corroborate the idea, that it was Lolótte he had admired and sought. Animated by this idea, Clarence hugged it to his heart; and assured that, during her present sorrow, no rival's claim could be urged even by her parents, he determined to lose not a moment in imploring their acquiescence, after he had arrived at something like certainty regarding his future destiny.

The discourses of the Prince de Condé were not of a nature to quench cheerfulness: he owned the delay was vexatious; but repeated, that after a few weeks' probation, if no other testimony came forward against Clarence's discretion, than what an anonymous letter preferred, the Queen of England would be ashamed of denying him justice on such a plea, and would then bestow it with full hands. Condé shook his head, smilingly, at the

fracas which had banished his equerry from the court of Blois, telling him, that he must learn to digest small injuries, as he was doing, to give him a right to avenge great ones.

Clarence was always delighted in the society of the prince, especially as he saw him now, in the bosom of retirement and his family; he enjoyed, besides, companionship with Maligny, the prince's most trusted officer, to whom Aigline had formerly been indebted for brief protection; but he waited and watched from day to day, for the appearance of his friend, without whom all places, save Roche Blanc, were irksome; and when he heard that indisposition detained him, he lamented, for the first time, his boiling resentment, which had brought on him the punishment of exile.

At such a time his heart yearned to Adhemar: Adhemar's was rent away from him again.

The queen-mother had early summoned

the latter to a private interview. He repaired to it on the instant, and found her in a state of real disturbance. Late events had precipitated the Comtesse d'Enghien's declaration in favour of the Duke de Longueville. His generous conduct merited it; and her own honour rendered it necessary for her to disavow, if she ever wished to do so, all thought of other bond with Clarence Willoughby than that of grateful regard. The present, was, perhaps, the happiest opportunity she could have chosen to mark distinctly that she had no delight in encouraging him to devote himself to her. So surprising a declaration, when the whole court believed Willoughby's release the consequence of the Comtesse's passionate pleading for him, thunderstruck and perplexed the queen-mother. She began to fear that he really was in part what she had tried only to make another suppose, deep and dissembling beyond the measure of youthful passions.

By the force and vivacity of her representations, she soon threw de Bourbon's soul into its former disorder. Clarence, she observed, must have had a weightier motive for his private visits to the royal chapel, and a different subject of correspondence with the Comtesse than love or gallantry. Disappointed, irritated by the Queen of England, he had perhaps courted, through the Comtesse's means, the favour of her who would succeed to the British crown if Elizabeth died without issue. To secure Mary's smiles, Catherine said, she knew nothing would be so certain as that of mortifying or disgracing *her;* and how was the latter to know what dangerous advantages Clarence's close connection with the Chevalier had afforded him of prying into her counsels? Some service he must have rendered, or be expected to render, to make his power cope with, nay, overawe the influence of the Guises in the affair of the Comte de Mirecourt. Mary might have

been induced to thwart her kindred so decidedly, for the sake of pleasing her favourite lady, had the person she was to act for, been the chosen lover of her favourite; but it was preposterous to think she would do it otherwise, unless she herself owed him a good turn. Clarence, alarmed at the colour of his affairs in England, might well have caught at the probability of aggrandizement in France, by means of an illustrious marriage; and seeking Comtesse d'Enghien with this pardonable view at first, might afterwards have had his ideas turned into another channel, when he found that her serious inclination pointed elsewhere. Whatever were his aims, it was evident they were closely concealed from the friend who would have entered into them with full soul had they been clear of blame. Quite sure that self-interest, or a bolder passion than even she ventured to hint to his pure-minded friend, had turned Willoughby into a domestic spy, Catherine

exerted all her artifice and oratory to revive former suspicion in that companion. Vehement as Adhemar was at first in his defence of Clarence's truth and attachment, (for the late affair at the court-ball was yet warm at his heart,) he could not disguise from her, or from himself, that he was not fully trusted by him; — that Clarence, in short, was mysteriously connected with others of the opposite party in politics and religion. Such an admission justified the queen-mother in demanding his repeated promise not to entrust one, either indiscreet, or deceptive, or unsteady, with any part of the state secret, which involved not only her honour and safety, but the lives of thousands; and justified her also in pressing upon his friend, what she said she would not otherwise have done, the striking fact, that Clarence's chastisement of the Comte de Mirecourt might as well be attributed to personal resentment, as to indignation against him on Adhemar's

account. In giving favourable testimony to Clarence Willoughby, the Duke de Longueville had rested principally upon the offensive appellation bestowed upon his friend, as the cause of his quarrel with Mirecourt, — that given to himself was now, for the first time, insinuated to have been the likeliest ground of Clarence's rashness: and the queen-mother, while enlarging upon it, contrived to throw such ridicule upon the credulous vanity which would prompt other opinion, in the face of so many opposite acts, that de Bourbon shrunk from defending Clarence, either to his accuser or his own heart. This last fond cord, however, which bound him to his first dependence upon Clarence, was not torn rudely away by the wary Catherine: she did it gently and surely; remarking, as she ended the discussion, that no one could well blame the chivalirc ambition of appearing rather as a friend's champion, than as one's own. Other subjects claimed her

attention, and, turning to them, she plunged at once into the boldest depths of her dangerous counsels.

All things connected with the confederacy were proceeding prosperously. Some of the noblest of the land were covertly promoting it: her Catholic adherents, joined to the large body of Hugonots, formed a powerful army, ready to start up, as it were, from the ground at the first signal. Depôts of arms were made all over the kingdom: — various divisions of troops organized and officered: — certain foreign princes pledged to countenance the enterprize of the confederates: the final blow waited only for two circumstances: the arrival of a vessel from Holland, freighted with arms, money, and able volunteers; and the temporary separation of the Guises from the king. It had been settled that it was best to surprise the ministers in one place, and possess themselves of the king's person in another; so to avoid

the scandal and irreverence of violence in the latter act.

Catherine's arts were to be employed, the moment his majesty should leave his chamber, to procure him to visit her at Chambord, the palace she occupied; and as neither the Duke de Guise, nor his brother, could presume to be of the party unasked, their seizure in the Chateau of Blois, and the king's transfer into other hands, would be an easy operation. The first act of her power in her royal son's name, she had always promised Adhemar, should be that of giving him a right to participation in the government; and this dazzling image she ever held before him, when, with a startled conscience, he thought of his uncle Condé, repenting and regretting his exclusion from their confidence. As the prospect of their great enterprize drew nearer, Catherine saw this uneasiness of mind increase. Adhemar's early principles, and habits of affectionate respect, troubled his present

ill-digested notions of public and private duty: he had estranged himself from the direction of Clarence Willoughby; and the timidity incident to his character in moral emergencies, rendered him sad and undecided. Alarmed for her own fate, if this irresolution of spirit should continue, and seek relief from weak confidence in his former friend, Catherine deemed it indispensable to her safety, to rid herself wholly of Clarence Willoughby. He had always appeared formidable to her from his high-wrought ideas of public virtue; he was now additionally so, from the mystery which enveloped him: and either romantic friendship for Adhemar de Bourbon, or a stronger sentiment for the young queen herself, might urge him to observe, watch, discover, and reveal, his friend's movements. If romantic zeal prompted him to this, Condé would be the person confided in: if self-interest in a criminal passion, Mary's uncles would be the con-

fidants. At any rate, the safest course was to get rid of him; and Catherine, determining on this, sent a second anonymous letter to the English ambassador. In this artful production, she bade him look well to young Willoughby, whose private visits to the young queen's chapel, and his obvious favour from her, must have some important meaning. "Willoughby has been publicly mortified by his sovereign," the letter said, "and humiliations often make traitors."

Catherine well knew, that politicians are too apt to learn the worst lessons of their enemies. Her Italian politics had brought into the court of France a system of such dissimulation and artifice, that she rightly guessed the minister of a more plain-dealing nation must try to secure themselves in the same way. Once put upon the scent of treasonable collusion between Clarence Willoughby and the Queen of Scots, she trusted to Throckmorton's sagacity for tracking it to proof; and so

obtaining a right to seize, and send, the supposed traitor to England. She had more demoniac accusations for her own management hereafter; should the death of her sickly son, and the pregnancy of Mary, make the succession of her favourite son a question, involving her claim to the immediate regency. At present, her business was to acquire the greatest preponderance in the confederacy. In this view, she came to the bold resolution of confiding herself to Rénaudie, and going amongst the confederates. Some of the best-intentioned had refused proceeding further, unless their plans were sanctioned, and their testimony against disloyal purposes sworn to, in the presence of one of their lawful princes, who would himself take the same oath. The queen-mother, informed of this dilemma, and of Rénaudie's purpose to apply at once to the Prince de Condé, became alarmed at the risk of so tempting or trusting Condé; and having Ré-

naudie privily brought to her by Adhemar, daringly offered to play that part herself. She proposed going disguised in men's apparel to the meeting of the confederates, and there witnessing and partaking the awful ceremony of swearing to the principles of the confederacy. Rénaudie might then, with unshrinking conscience, declare the assembly saw before them one of their princes, whom needful caution justified in concealment from all, save the original framer of the scheme, until it was perfected, and its greatest head demanded openly.

This offer was accepted : — Rénaudie, however startled and alarmed at first by Catherine's privity to a plan intended principally for the relief of his persecuted brethern in the faith, became convinced of her sincere desire to obtain fresh power and dignity for herself, by the only obvious means now in her option, that of co-operation with religious enemies. He was not cheated, like Adhemar,

by her pretensions to tolerant feelings; but he saw the immense advantage of her name and influence; and he thought with too much contempt of a woman as a rival to men and heroes, in the grasp of dominion, not to disregard all fear of her future mischievousness. The confederated gentlemen of the Orléanois were to assemble on a certain night, in a large building, originally built for a granary, and now hired by one of them under pretence of lodging goods there for transport to the Loire. It stood about half a league from Blois, on the same small river which flowed through the park of Chambord; so that the queen-mother, who inhabited that beautiful palace, had no occasion to pass through or near the town, in her way to the granary. The hour was named, and a place of rendezvous appointed.

CHAP. VIII.

The night proved dark and tempestuous, and the Chevalier, as he rose from the melancholy posture in which he had been sitting till the clock sounded the given hour, looked round for his cloak. Seeing it not, and cautious not to awaken Beaurevoir, his gentleman of the chamber, by going in quest of it near him, he passed through an inner room along a short corridor to the apartments belonging to Clarence, and taking up the cloak ordinarily worn by his friend, returned to descend his own private staircase which led down into a garden. From some accidental cause, Beaurevoir was not gone

to rest, and hearing steps on the stairs, mechanically went to the window to see if it were his lord, going to nurse moody fancies as he was wont, even in the air of the most biting nights. What was his surprise, a few moments afterwards, to see, as he supposed, Clarence Willoughby issue from the portal below, discovered to him by the gleaming of the small lantern he held, and by his cloak of scarlet cloth, cut in the fashion Clarence always affected — of England!

Willoughby, formally banished from court, ought not to be there; and, transported at the prospect of drawing fresh displeasure on his head, — nay, excited by the hope of discovering an intrigue, Beaurevoir hurried on his mask and mantle, listened to hear that all was still in his lord's chamber, and, favoured by the extreme darkness, followed his object.

The light Adhemar held, though somewhat shaded by him, became a guiding

star to him that followed. The height, and the step, more rapid than the Chevalier's ordinary movement, made Beaurevoir sure he was tracking Clarence Willoughby, who, traversing only by-paths after he had quitted the town, stopt at the door of a deserted oratory or chapel, which connected the wide demesne of Chambord with the park of a smaller chateau, occasionally occupied by different members of the royal house. As the lantern was held determinately to the aperture of the lock, a bolt was withdrawn, and a single figure came forth, closely muffled. This person looked round anxiously, so that Beaurevoir, being obliged to fall under a deeper shade of trees, lost his whispered greeting to his associate. Neither of the figure, nor the quality of this person, could he have any guess: but curiosity and hope of mischief were keenly roused; and keeping both persons close in his eye, he stole after them under trees and bushes

through the unfrequented paths by which they crossed to the river bank. The ground now became opener, so that Beaurevoir was obliged to keep at a greater distance; and he finally lost sight of them in a chalky hollow, surrounded by tall walnut trees. On advancing into this hollow, he saw only the granary and excavations made by the chalk-cutters. Whether the mysterious pair had entered one of those artificial caverns, or mounted into an upper chamber of the edifice, he was at a loss to determine. They were gone; and the wind now blew so fiercely, that it stunned his sense of sound. Light, however, appeared to him, as he intently examined it, to shoot at intervals from the top of the building in question, glancing on the highest branches of the trees as the blasts bent them forward occasionally. With difficulty he then clambered up one of the huge walnuts, and ascertaining the fact, with infinite dexterity, and far more daring than he

had ever shown in a good cause, contrived to slide from the tree to a parapet, whence he had a downward view through a barred loop-hole of the barn-like hall and its occupants.

The space he saw, was thronged with men, wearing their hats and cloaks, as if met for hasty business. Amongst them he recognised many that he knew, of his own religion and party; (shame that he was to both;) but the hall being lighted only here and there, by the lanterns of such as bore them, was too obscure to gratify the whole of his curiosity. The two principal figures were so placed, however, that he discerned all their movements. What was said on their entrance, and spoken afterwards, baffled his utmost efforts to hear: the pealing wind tossing the boughs of the walnuts like so many surges, deafened him, and drowned the voices of those within. He now saw Jean de Rénaudie approach with a book in his hand, which

he guessed to be the sacred volume from what followed its appearance; for both he that Beaurevoir conjectured to be Clarence Willoughby, and his unknown companion, lifted their hats as it was presented to them, and the former took off his walking mask. Beaurevoir nearly lost his footing, from the surprize of discovering in him not Clarence, but Adhemar de Bourbon. Who his mute companion might be, remained concealed, for he uncovered not his visage; merely kissing the ponderous volume with an air of respect and fervour. The shout which then resounded through the hall, was loud enough to overpower the striving of the shrill blasts without. Beaurevoir could not doubt that some oath was administering of importance to the crowd below; but whether it were one of a treasonable nature, or simply a solemn compact of Christians to live and die in the faith they possessed, whatever temptations or trials might await them in a

season of persecution, he knew not to determine. But his course was plain: he had not been trusted in either case, by his lord or his brother Protestants, — he owed them then no obligation — he was disappointed too of a place in the court of Navarre, which the Chevalier had almost promised to ask for him, but which he had waived when he was induced to urge the promotion of François la Marot: Beaurevoir was in love, also, as he miscalled a vain and interested inclination for the daughter of one of the queen-dowager's titled retainers; and he remembered with acrimonious clearness sundry rebukes and pshaws! with which de Bourbon's troubled moods had of late prompted him to quell the levity of his jester. Convinced he could hear nothing, satisfied with what he had seen, and fearful of discovery by some of the party within, he descended nimbly from his perilous station, and reaching the ground without accident, speeded back through

darkness and tedious ways to his own quarters. He had long stretched his limbs upon his bed, ere he heard his lord's perturbed tread within the chamber adjoining. Beaurevoir's spirit rested not; and he wasted the remaining hours of night in calculating future loss or gain, and justifying his perfidy to his master. But Beaurevoir had a confidant; and to this person, a worldly man of riper age, he resorted for advice. It was decided between them that the surest market for his disgraceful merchandize would be the queen-mother: she was known to bid high for secret information of every kind, and it was in her power to influence the lady and her parents whom Beaurevoir pronounced himself enamoured with. No other distinguished personage was likely to give personal hearing to the informant. The Guises, intoxicated with their power, and relying on the Prince de Condé's word (hitherto inviolate) of not disturbing public peace until public

grievances were duly represented to the king through the constitutional channel, entertained not a fear of other enemy. They had just quieted his rising impatience by convoking the states to meet in the month of August; resolving, nevertheless, to postpone them when the time drew near: they awed the king of Navarre by the neighbourhood of Spain; and they had divined the character of his abler nephew sufficiently to believe that he would never trust any set of persons long enough to carry on a full concerted enterprize to the end. Adhemar's sad adventure in Gascony had not been so smothered as to escape the hearing of their creatures; so that these proud nobles, in common with many others at court, considered the Chevalier now but as the hero of a melancholy love tale, without thought or energy for aught of stirring action. The temporary seditions of the discontented and the heretical, were so speedily and mercilessly crushed,

that every day seemed to diminish their courage with their numbers: while, in truth, both increased by concealment. Beaurevoir saw all this; and dismissing the idea of seeking such proud and secure ministers, through their host of inferior administrators, after three or four days brooding and pondering, went straight to the queen-mother.

She admitted him, as he expected, in consequence of the hint he dropt to her chamberlain, and was honoured with a gracious hearing: while listening to his faithful narrative, her smooth countenance gave no indication of the consternation it excited: she watched him well as he described the companion of Adhemar de Bourbon, to see if she was suspected — but Beaurevoir had no such suspicion; and Catherine kindled a very different thought in him, by saying, as if reflecting, aloud — "Slighter and lower than the Chevalier! — why so is Condé — but he is at Meaux." Then hastening

to commend her informant's zeal and ability, and confessing that the mysterious assembly might have met for some pernicious purpose, she drew from him, nothing loth, a confession of wherein she could serve him in return for the compliment of making her the depositary of this discovery. She then charged him to silence until she sent for him again, and had resolved what steps to take, in so delicate an affair. Flatteringly apologizing to his pride, while aware of its acceptableness to his unworthy necessities, (for Beaurevoir was a gamester,) she presented him with a purse of gold, which, she said, would have been a more honorary present, had she not feared to draw attention towards their recent friendship. Thus stooping to flatter the vile betrayer of his master, she dismissed him to ponder upon her own future conduct, and his likelihood of fidelity.

She had narrowly questioned whether Beaurevoir had imparted his night's

adventure to any one, and he had unhesitatingly denied it; but the boldest falsehood could not pass undetected by such a mistress of Machiavelian policy; and the profligate hardihood of Beaurevoir's oath on the occasion, nay, the oath itself, assured her that he had previously made a confidant of some other. If so, there was no guessing where the train of confidences might reach: the plot would be suspected, traced, discovered, and her ruin be as certain as that of de Bourbon, Chartres, Montmorenci, and all the rest of their party. What then remained, but at once to abandon the scheme, and buy power and gratitude for herself with the blood of her former colleagues! Catherine's resolution was taken on the instant: and waiting only for a list of the conspirators, which she hoped to obtain from Rénaudie, she dissimulated her alarm and her changed sentiments, meeting Adhemar de Bourbon as usual.

Not long after this the Prince de Condé suddenly appeared at Blois, brought thither by the open infringement of the mutual compact between him and the king. As if to indemnify themselves for the mock concession of commanding the states general, the ministers had imprisoned, tried, and finally condemned a member of the parliament of Paris, a man of peculiar sanctity of character, on the charge of heresy, to the dreadful punishment of the stake, and Condé flew to demand his release on the faith of the royal proclamation and private promise. Clarence's short term of court exile being over, he joined him at the chateau near Chambord. Aware that interference for the venerable de Bourg had united with indisposition to keep Adhemar de Bourbon at his post in Blois, he felt no chagrin at his absence from Meaux, but hurried with open arms to meet the friend from whom he had parted with such a glow of affection. Without esti-

mating the value of his own spirited conduct towards the Comte de Mirecourt too highly, he naturally believed it would be remembered kindly by Adhemar whenever they met again: this hope was chilled. Adhemar was not to be found when he first sought him, and when he was found it was in the midst of others. Clarence, after one, two, three meetings, knew not how to complain, or of what to complain, or whether he had any real cause of complaint: he simply felt that Adhemar was more changed than ever. The heavy cloud, of late so frequent on the Chevalier's brow, which the queen's ball had cleared away, was returned; and as Clarence silently, sadly contemplated it, he abated some of the pain it caused by thinking that since it had gathered thus in his absence, it could have no reference to him. He lamented then, with bitterness of soul, that for de Bourbon's griefs and disappointments, even friendship had no balm. He would not add, that even

friendship had ceased to interest him: although he felt that when he talked of England and his father, Adhemar listened with a stern fixture of thought upon other subjects doubtless, or answered like a man walking in a dream.

Clarence courted every opinion that represented his friend to him rather as changed by suffering than in actual qualities. He still imagined him overpowered by passionate sorrow for Lolótte; and by the mortification of witnessing the growing power of a faction, that while they revelled in the blood of martyrs and heroes, were likely to shut him out from places of honour and usefulness. Both feelings were such as a generous soul might admit without blame, provided it retained due command over them: but Adhemar's seemed so completely subjugated by their force, that Clarence sighed over the erroneousness of his own judgment, which had formerly imagined his

friend's character fully matched to his difficult destiny.

Pitying him more, without loving him less, he endeavoured to woo him out of solitude and himself, by that alternation of gaiety and seriousness which had formerly been the very aliment of de Bourbon's life, and which was calculated either to disperse his gnawing cares, or to cheat him into talking of them. These attempts were, however, met, or rather endured, with a dejected coldness which first pained, then offended Clarence. He was himself but a human being, "passioned as we;" and even his heart was capable of resentment at the object dearest to him, when strongly roused. Duty placed him in the same residence with the Prince de Condé, while the latter remained near the court; so that unless he and Adhemar purposely sought each other, they met but in society, or by accident. Clarence, of course, abstained from disturbing the unsocial meditations of his friend

as much as possible; but there were times when his own feelings were so greatly agitated, that he found himself unable to resist the old habit of confidence. An impulse of this kind carried him one day to Adhemar's apartments: he had heard of his father through a by-channel: an acquaintance of Maligny's had been in England, and brought the account of a recent illness from which Mr. Willoughby was but just recovering — it had evidently been produced by trouble of mind; for it was understood in London that something in young Willoughby's conduct had given the queen such displeasure, that she was determined never to give his cause a hearing; since once heard, she must in justice decide in his favour. Distracted with the idea of his father's loneliness and suffering, he hurried to his friend, to ask him whether he might not sue for permission to join his father; declaring that he would rather forfeit every prospect in life than bear his pre-

sent uneasiness. The Chevalier had strangers with him when Clarence entered; but the latter was so impatient, that he took him aside, to ask his sanction for going to the English ambassador — nay, in that moment of filial distress, to pray his personal suit for him. The chilling composure with which Adhemar listened to expressions of the most agitating kind, did not arise from that deadness of sympathy which seemed the case to the astonished Clarence, it sprung from bitter disdain of what he thought affected feeling: he could no longer believe Clarence true to any affection, since he was false to the one he had so often professed for him — and at first scorn entered his heart, then harrowing regret. He spoke, however, reservedly — avoiding the question of going to the ambassador, by assuring Clarence that report had magnified the indisposition of Mr. Willoughby, though certainly not the queen's displeasure — for he had letters that mentioned

both; and taking one from his breast, he bade his friend carry it home and satisfy himself. Clarence whispered that he would take a few turns in the meadows, read it there, and return to discuss it, when the Chevalier's visitors should be gone.

"I have other engagements," de Bourbon said, with an embarrassed air, as if willing to rid himself of the irksome task of hearing and consulting.

Clarence stood fixed for a moment; then proudly resolving to seek him no more, until he was sought, abruptly bade him good day, and retired.

Adhemar de Bourbon suffered him to depart in miserable silence: he had read in Clarence's features the vexation of his heart; and, spite of himself, he felt his own heart rent in twain by the conviction of so repaying the devotedness of his. He tried to shake off this impression, by reminding himself that it had not, however, been sincere; at least, not perma-

nent: yet the grief was as great, if not of the same nature as what his first feeling made it. His whole soul yearned for the trust, the affection, the happiness of their early friendship; he looked round for these in vain; his own weaknesses, and the machinations of others, had driven them afar off: they were rapidly passing away; and at this moment he gazed on the skirts of their departing brightness. Another such meeting, and all would be extinguished! Adhemar could no longer attend to the persons with him; and abruptly giving them their dismissal, he cast himself on a seat, pursuing the dismal meditations their presence had imposed a restraint on. Life, rifled of every charm, (for love and friendship were uprooted,) offered nothing now to Adhemar, except the mere blaze of glory; and what was that, without some cherished companion to share, or to admire the ray? What infatuation then continued dragging him

on, to the hazardous enterprize in which he had engaged at first, principally from motives of self-aggrandizement? Would the station he had coveted so long, recompense him now? The deadness of his heart answered, no! Then what impelled him? Was it fate? A fate prophetic of woe, perhaps death to him, however gloriously the struggle might terminate for his coadjutors? In the very spirit of suicide, he actually hailed that ominous idea: till religion and conscience gradually awoke and silenced the cries of passion. He started at the darkness of his thoughts; endeavouring to substitute repentance for despair. "Yes!" he exclaimed, "I am justly punished for the baseness of my motives. And now, my country! my suffering countrymen, I will devote myself to your service on a better principle! From this hour I abjure what I have sought so long and so ardently!" As he spoke, he put his hand into his breast to draw thence a billet

from Rénaudie, which he had been reading when his late company broke in upon him: it was not there. For an instant he was bewildered — crazyed with so many torturing feelings; — but recollecting the one he had given to Clarence, he guessed that it must have slipped into the cover of that, and be now in his possession. Personal interest in the perilous confederacy, de Bourbon had just renounced; but the interests of too many others were at stake for him to remain undisturbed, when it was possible that Clarence might acquaint himself with their secret, and be inclined to make a fatal use of his knowledge. He hastened into the meadows Clarence spoke of walking in, but he was not there: these were, however, in the road to his present residence, and most likely he had gone on thither, since denied encouragement to return. De Bourbon could only quiet his perturbation by remembering that the greatest part of this letter was in cipher.

Having attained the chateau, he went, without hesitation or announcement, straight to the apartment of Clarence, whom he found sitting in softened musing over the letter from one of Elizabeth's confidential counsellors, which he had meant him to read. How bright a light shone in Clarence's face when he saw him! One kind act would at any time efface from his heart the memory of unnumbered wounding ones — and now, when he believed his friend sought him to share his anxieties, and imagine a mode of relieving them, he was ready to place every foregone transgression and omission to the account of mere humour. He rose with a movement of affectionate joy, which his friend yielded to, without well knowing what he did: so that whether he and Clarence had embraced, or shaken hands, he could not have told the next moment. Clarence entered at once upon the subject of the English statesman's letter: it was in reply to one the

Chevalier had formerly written to attest his belief of his friend having been calumniated, and merely said, sparingly, but severely, that the queen had her reasons for great circumspection; for that other accounts displeased her on the score of young Willoughby, which when she had sifted, if they were not found blameful, she might be made favourable to him again; but if found true, he must abide the consequences, since he should surely know them. Mr. Willoughby's illness was then briefly stated as having given breathing to Elizabeth's ministers from his importunities.

Clarence was so eager in following up his own reflections upon this letter, that he did not observe at first the universal disorder of his friend's looks, whose thoughts were all engrossed by the important paper he wished to regain. Adhemar assented to each of his companion's remarks, without adding an observation; and as these were of a sanguine nature,

Clarence was agreeably surprized to find that his friend, for once in his life, was inclined to believe that no false accusation could eventually triumph over truth. He was still further gratified, when the latter, scarcely conscious what he said, told him he would make it his business to see Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and ask him to obtain certain information of Mr. Willoughby's state. The next instant, after a little hesitation, he enquired whether he had not given his friend another paper? The bloodless look of Adhemar, as he asked this, made Clarence unwittingly fix his eyes with peculiar earnestness, but he lifted the letter from among some papers, and gave it to him. "Had I guessed it was of such consequence!" he said, then proceeded to apologize for having intended to put it aside until he saw his friend again, which he expected to have done at dinner with Condé. Previous emotion had almost mastered Adhemar de Bour-

bon, so that he could not command either his complexion or his respiration; he breathed with difficulty, and his hand evidently trembled as he extended it. Clarence considered his changed aspect stedfastly for a moment or two—imaginations—convictions thronged upon him. "Adhemar," he said at length, his heart rapidly melting, "I would neither importune, nor reproach you—but I would fain know wherein I am changed, or you are changed, that you lock up your soul's secrets from me, as this paper testifies?"

"Then you have read it!" exclaimed de Bourbon, starting up from the seat he had sunk into. For once Clarence's impetuosity befriended him: before the Chevalier could articulate the injurious epithet he was about to apply to him, Clarence had repelled the base suspicion, with a force and imperiousness which left no doubt of his truth. "Never till now," he exclaimed, "did I know the measureless depth of my love for you,

Adhemar! — What! to believe me capable of reading a letter accidentally placed in my hands! Any other person's name upon a corner of a letter, is a bolt and bar to me — to every one that is not infamous. Nothing can extenuate such a suspicion except the only reason I would accept — the lives of thousands being at stake! — Adhemar," he continued, struck more powerfully by the force of his own conclusions — "the superscription I saw was in the writing of Jean de Rénaudie. I know his flaming zeal; if he have tempted you into dangerous counsels for the public good, in God's name, go not a step farther than your uncle Condé goes with you — and if *he* is not a party to your purposes, abandon them altogether. What he would not countenance, must be wrong. I ought not to remind you, perhaps — that there is a friend, who would as freely have gone with you to the block as to a field of victory, in a righteous cause—*he* might

have hoped — " Clarence's quivering lips could articulate no more, and he turned away his face to hide the extent of his emotion.

De Bourbon supported himself meanwhile with difficulty against the wall of the room, his eyes were fixed on the ground, but his heart was struggling to break away, and cast itself into the arms of this insulted, much-enduring friend. He had been prepared for fiery reproaches from Clarence, but not for this generous softness. The insinuations of the queen-mother, the exhortations of the English ambassador, the black melancholy of his own misanthropic mind and desolated fate, combated in vain the single impression of affection and truth, which the words, the voice, the aspect of Clarence in this moment of keen emotion, made upon his soul. He drew a profound sigh: but striving with what he deemed a weakness, and fortifying himself against it, by the recollection of

what was at stake, he said almost inaudibly, "Do *you* reproach another with concealment?—Have not you secrets also?"

Clarence started with conviction, not alarm; and he answered promptly: "I confess it: and I crave your forgiveness for the petulance with which I remarked upon your reserve. I know by my own uncomfortable experience, that a man may be the depositary of another person's secret, and be unable to impart it to his dearest friend. But when once he has owned such a cause for apparent estrangement, his friend is satisfied. Only say this to me, Adhemar, only say this—and let us, for God's sake, be as we were wont, together."

At the last words, the Chevalier raised his head, with what intention, Clarence was not destined to know: for a page entering at that moment, and summoning the latter to entertain some noble guests until his prince could attend upon

them himself, gave de Bourbon time to recollect his obligation to silence. In return for his disordered look, Clarence returned one of sincere disappointment; but the page was waiting, and the Chevalier taking advantage of his presence without referring to what had passed, hastily said, "Farewell," and withdrew.

The more agitated Clarence ventured not to stay him; grief and comfort both were in his heart. He had achieved much, by having brought his friend to the confession of some discontent with him: for if the moody fitfulness of his late conduct did indeed originate in jealousy of Clarence's forced reserve upon the subject of his visits to the young queen's chapel, he might hope eventually to obtain permission to explain all he knew of it; or, at least, be enabled to present his friend with the one signal proof that it had no connection with the alienation he suspected. The consolation

afforded by such ideas were, however, painfully alloyed by the apprehension of some perilous scheme being agitated between Adhemar and those of the oppressed Hugonots with whom his very duties had so frequently thrown him: — he remembered many expressions used by his friend in their early arguments upon the fitness of the Prince de Condé's conduct, which corroborated the apprehension, and made him fear that Adhemar might be wrought upon to make some hasty engagement with over-zealous patriots which he would afterwards dread imparting to his uncle. Little did Clarence imagine that he was already engulphed in such schemes; much less that he was leagued with the very woman against whose arts and insincerity, Condé had so strongly warned him. Hoping — for Clarence ever hoped — that with returning kindness would come former confidence, he trusted that the sort of explanation which he had once more

repeated, abou this secret intercourse with the young queen, would efface all lingering dissatisfaction from the mind of his friend, and so afford him frequent opportunities of insisting upon the peril of every public object which his uncle refused to sanction. At any rate, he thought what had recently passed between them gave him a right to speak upon the subject of his alarm to Adhemar himself, though to no other; and elevated by a late message from the royal Mary, he believed the moment was not very distant when he should be able to enforce all he might say, by showing that determined hostility to him and other Hugonots was chiefly attributable to the Guises themselves.

While he nursed such kind and generous fancies, plot and mischief were darkening around him, and the friend for whom he cherished them. The scene between himself and Adhemar de Bourbon roused the better nature of the latter,

to struggle more vigorously with the unworthy timidity which had hitherto made a coward of him. He sought the queen-mother; refusing to proceed further in their project, unless permitted to reveal the matter to his uncle Condé. So many of the new confederates belonged to the regiment and the estates of the prince, and so many more were amongst his intimate friends, and such a number believed him a secret encourager of the scheme, that it seemed impossible for Condé to escape the general ruin if the confederacy were discovered, or baffled. In that deplorable case, any slight testimony would be greedily taken against him; and he might either be brought innocently to the scaffold, or live branded with the dishonour of having broken his word to the king. To give Condé the option of sharing the loss and gain was all Adhemar desired; he sought not to importune him to their party: he wished only to have it in his power to

testify, in case of ill fortune, and to call on witnesses of the fact, that his uncle had refused co-operation with the confederates, and that on Adhemar's head, therefore, punishment ought to fall. He added to this declaration, a brief account of the humiliation he had just endured upon the subject of Renaudie's letter, blaming his own disordered spirits for the accident, and describing his friend's honourable indignation, and subsequent zeal, with a sort of virtuous envy.

Catherine's lightning glance saw at once the use she might make of this accident, and of Adhemar's present earnestness for his uncle's admission into their confidence. At first she affected disturbance and displeasure; — then allowed her reluctance to be softened by her companion's arguments; and finally submitted to the prospect of being associated, she said, with one, ever ungraciously disposed towards her. The fittest time for making this disclosure was then discussed;

when it was settled, that the moment for securing the prince's alliance, or at least, after-silence, would be when his passions were roused by some act of the ministers which emancipated him from the obligation to keep faith with them. This, she grieved to say, would too soon occur, in the public execution of that unfortunate gentleman for whom Conde was now making vain remonstrances, and whose destruction she believed determined upon. For some such event, though deprecating it with his whole heart, de Bourbon consented to wait; but declared that he would intimate to Clarence, (what he should have done in their last interview, had it not been interrupted) that to his mysterious connexion with the young queen, the perplexity of his business in England might be attributed, and that, consequently, he ought to make explanations to Elizabeth's ambassador, as well as to him. Catherine significantly advised him to take Throck-

morton's opinion ere he spoke to Clarence; and dismissing him on that errand, speeded the advancement of her own.

This mistress in vile policy had now fully ascertained the character of Adhemar de Bourbon. She had long suspected that it was neither strong enough in good nor in ill for her purposes: purer motives at first, would have rendered him firm in conduct; worse ones would have made the worst means indifferent to him. She had always feared that he would some day escape her altogether, and throw himself back into the arms of his uncle or his friend. Her plan of selfish policy, therefore, was fixed by the present interview; and waiting only for the return of the Duke de Guise from Paris, whither he had lately gone, she began the arrangements with which he was to be connected.

Beaurevoir was now completely in her hands — of course she stiled it, in her

confidence; and discussing with him the quality of the muffled person he had traced to the granary on the Classon, she adroitly led him to adopt her avowed opinion that it was Condé himself, — or made him understand that it would be to his advantage to believe and swear it. When convinced he would not shrink from doing the last, she put him aside till required, with presents and promises, and charge to watch his masters well. Clarence was just gone to Paris, deputed thither by Condé on the affair of the imprisoned de Bourg, while the prince himself besieged the king with a mixture of petition and bold reproaches. This little embassy was propitious to Catherine's views: she had begun Clarence's ruin from cold policy alone; but persevering in it till calculation grew into passion, she would have sought to consummate her wish, even had its expediency ceased. It was, however, still important to get rid of his remaining

power over Adhemar, and his familiar station beside the prince; and this might be done, if she could manage to make her own discoveries to the other party appear his act. Another hand, in addition to hers, was preparing, as she expected, the Chevalier's distempered mind for her meditated stratagem. In answer to Adhemar's request for permission to send Clarence to England, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton reproved his unwise zeal, by assuring him he had grounds for such fearful suspicion of Willoughby's fidelity to his faith and his sovereign, that he might shortly look for a summons from Elizabeth herself, though it might be for a very different purpose than the rash and resentful youth imagined: — and that he might tell him this, though without guarding him, by hinting at the nature of this summons. De Bourbon briefly dispatched this equivocal message after Clarence, to spare himself the agonizing embarrass-

ment of speaking on the subject; and, relapsing into doubt and darkness, once more became solitary and miserable.

The Duke de Guise returned to Blois. Catherine de Medicis lost not a moment in requesting him to visit her privately. She first bargained for certain possessions and privileges for herself, during his administration, upon condition of revealing a secret most important to the state. Then detailed the particulars of the confederacy; representing her share in it, as intended from the commencement, for the service of her son and his ministers. Guise either was, or feigned to be convinced, of her sincerity in the last declaration: after sifting her well, gave the promises she exacted; and while astonished at her talent for political intrigue, learnt the needful lesson of fearing and watching her hereafter.

Neither of these new allies could hesitate in deciding that the only way of crushing sedition, and extirpating heresy,

would be to cut off the two heads at once, Condé and his nephew: the king of Navarre was comparatively harmless, and Spain might take care of him. If Condé could be goaded or allured into the conspiracy, as Catherine now denominated the union of so many aggrieved and patriotic Christians, his ruin might be accomplished with every appearance of justice. Even a prince of the blood, convicted as a heretic and a traitor, might lawfully fall under the stroke of the headsman. To effect this aim, it was necessary for Catherine still to carry on her intercourse with Rénaudie and Adhemar, while provocations were purposely to be accumulated upon Condé. If these failed to tempt him into rebellion when he was informed of the enterprize meditated, then, ere the great blow could be struck, the prince and other obnoxious persons might be seized, and Beaurevoir brought forward to swear he had seen the prince and the Chevalier

together in the assembly of the conspirators. Catherine was sure enough to find means of proving more criminal views in many of the persons so leagued, than were the true objects of the original designers; and those views attributed to her victims would ensure their condemnation. Clarence Willoughby's banishment from his friend necessarily formed a part of this scheme, and Catherine undertook to manage that almost immediately, provided the Guises enacted the parts she could design for them: — a panic of suspicion on their side, suddenly raised, and quickly allayed, might appear the result of Willoughby's imperfect information, and the plot yet be suffered to go on, until Condé, Coligny and other dangerous nobles, were drawn into the snare—"Then draw the net over them!" she cried: "then let the work of destruction begin!"

Never had demoniac plan ampler success! The king was suddenly surrounded

by guards; the granary on the Classon seized; the whole court alarmed with a rumour that some danger threatened the state; and the Prince de Condé openly summoned to answer certain questions, involving his own honour and the security of public peace. Condé answered these with the prompt indignation Guise expected; scornfully demanding his private papers to be sent for and examined in his presence, ere he returned home to be suspected of altering or destroying them. These, when seen, proved nothing beyond the patriotic views he had always avowed. Rénaudie arrested, and confronted with him, serenely denied all connexion with the prince; yet admitted having procured a meeting of Hugonots on the Classon, the sole object of which was to consult, he said, upon the best mode of reconciling conscience with the security of life and property; and to such a meeting none of the members would have shrunk from inviting one

of the blood-royal. No one came forward to contradict this assertion, and nothing was found in the granary, except a few bales of goods. The ministers affected to make compensation to the offended dignity of the prince by declining to interrogate his nephew, and all things returned seemingly to their former rest.

Condé's just irritation was amused for awhile, with the assurance (which Guise meant to render more aggravating by breaking it) that de Bourg's life would be spared, and that he was only now kept in confinement to appease the furious bigotry of the Parisian populace. Determined to be guided by the truth or falsity of this assertion in his after-conduct, Condé sent for Adhemar de Bourbon, not to question him on the subject of the meeting at the granary, but to state its imprudence by showing the consequences.

"With my honour in your hands," he said, "since you were left to act in my

stead at court, I know you incapable of entering into any such engagements without my concurrence. But, by the sacred Heavens, if the court does not fulfil its bond to me — nay, if one hair of the venerable de Bourg's head falls, I shall hold myself excused from every tie to them, and shall seek justice by bolder ways than they dream of!"

His uncle's fearless confidence gave Adhemar time to collect his amazed spirits. He had been struck by the inadequacy of the information upon which ministers acted: that information reached exactly to the extent of what might have been deduced from Rénaudie's letter, which Clarence had retained long enough to study and decipher wholly. The only names mentioned in that letter were Condé's, and that of the writer of it; and these were the only persons examined. Condé was thus mentioned — (or rather the queen-mother, when her silent apparition dazzled and delighted the con-

federates) — "All who wish it, continue to assure each other that your masked companion was your brave uncle: since that fortunate night, our union swells daily."

De Bourbon could not avert his thoughts from the hateful ideas dependent upon these remembrances; and pleading sudden indisposition, he broke from his uncle to seek conviction or comfort from his habitual counseller, the queen-mother. His harrassed and over-wearied soul could no longer bear its weight of misery singly: — he went to her, and confessed the horrible suspicions his uncle's information had awakened in him. Catherine was prepared to confirm it: — she stept to her escritoire, and taking thence a note recently received — written, she well knew, by her own directions — she presented it to Adhemar. It was a formal notification from the Duke de Guise of danger menacing all the royal family, from the machinations of the Bourbon

princes — distinctly adding, that the information came to him from one of the Vicomte de Limoges' most intimate and trusted inmates. This character seemed to apply fully only to Clarence Willoughby — not one of de Bourbon's suite *were* trusted by him. Alas, what a weight of evidence bore down former confidence!

Clarence's own mystery, the English ambassador's suspicions, and the present testimonials! Adhemar abruptly renounced all hope — and all further examination: — he forbade the queen to speak to him again of Willoughby; and resolving to shun him, retired, under pretence of continued indisposition, from every scene where they were likely to meet.

All things were now apparently restored to their original quiet: yet his spirit slept no more. The ghost of former happiness haunted him every where; in the silence of night, in the din of day — no where could he escape from it. In

proportion as he loathed all present things, and shuddered at a future where he saw nothing to desire, he looked back with more passionate regret to those times when he enjoyed even simple pleasures, because they were vividly enjoyed by the friend he believed as immutable in affection, as impregnable in honour. Now, whatever reminded him of Clarence, gave him agony. The companions, the books, they would have tasted so much together, (and which Clarence's mirthful or imaginative moods heightened in pleasurableness,) were pregnant only with bitterness: every thing joyous, every thing amiable, revived his image; so that far from soothing, they aggravated the suffering of de Bourbon. Clarence had been the cordial drop, the bright sparkle in his cup of life: the bubble, however, had burst, and the remaining draught was loathsome!

Persons of a melancholy temperament, when they have lost part of their happi-

ness, are too apt to fling away all the rest. Adhemar, bereaved of Lolótte, and his own self-esteem, (for every day increased his repentance of the unworthy motives which had first led him into union with more disinterested patriots,) began to weary of contest with what he believed his destiny; and such a distaste of life seized him, that he became obviously indifferent to his very existence.

Condé had heard from others and extracted from Clarence, when at Meaux, the history of his nephew's melancholy connexion with the fate of Baron de Roche Blanc's beautiful daughter; and attributing the reserved sadness of Adhemar now to that cause, he considerately refrained from questioning him upon it, or exhorting him to manlier fortitude. Loftier subjects claimed the prince's immediate attention.

As the policy of the Lorraine faction was to irritate Condé, by sporting with

their promises to him and his clients, they began to multiply pains and penalties afresh among the Hugonots, upon frivolous pretences, suffering their creatures to whisper loudly the king's intention of deferring the assembly of the states-general. Condé's indignation was gradually kindling into a fixed purpose; and peremptorily giving the ministers and the imbecile monarch a certain period for liberating de Bourg, or taking the consequences of their breach of faith, he waited in breathless impatience for the moment that would end or legitimate his resolution of vengeance. Regardless of his fierce remonstrances, or the stifled murmurs of the people, the ministers appeared once more intoxicated with their power, and secure of its continuance: — the nation, too, seemed in a stupor of misery, or insensibility. Yet was the reckless confidence of the one, and the lethargic dullness of the other, unreal: — every thing was, in fact, on

the eve of fearful change; the great counter-machines of Rénaudie's confederacy, and Catherine de Medici's plot, were rolling silently forwards to the shock of contact.

At this period Clarence returned from Paris, and re-appeared in the court circles.

CHAP. IX.

The anxiety of our hero, on his friend's account, had been incessant during his absence; for he could not banish the remembrance of Rénaudie's letter, and Adhemar's agitation concerning it: but on hearing what had taken place between the ministers and the Prince de Condé, together with Rénaudie's examination, he believed his fears groundless; and hastening to thank Adhemar for the dubious message from Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, proceeded to the expected interview with a glow of pleasurable feelings. He was chilled by finding his friend absent. Adhemar, conscious that he was not sufficiently steeled to en-

counter the sight of a false friend with the calm scorn he believed due to his own character, purposely quitted Blois the day Clarence arrived, leaving only the same message for him as for others, — that business called him away. When he returned, he contrived to see Clarence, for the first time, in the midst of society; and so determinately did he avoid private meetings afterwards, that he baffled every one of his open efforts to converse with him singly.

No longer inhabiting the same house, this was easily accomplished: at first, their personal estrangement seemed the mere effect of accident, or attributable to the intervention of weightier concerns. But chance has its variations; and Clarence's disappointments being invariable, at length awakened him to the wounding conviction that he was resolutely avoided. Unlike the person who thus pierced him to the soul, Clarence's nature, sensitive as it was, was adhesive and confiding;

more prone to seek causes for justification, than of anger, against those it loved. Once more he began to fear that his friend was indeed entangled in some deeper plans of imprudent patriotism than he had suspected, and that with generous unkindness he abstained from confiding them to him, lest he should be involved in their possible mischief.

Animated by greater anxiety and affection, when once this idea entered Clarence's head, he sought Adhemar but the more earnestly. Still he found himself shunned; and a written entreaty for a decided appointment to meet, answered so coldly and laconically, that honest affection could stoop no lower, but, retreating within itself, desisted from further importunity. Clarence had no consolation left, except the hope of soon repaying Adhemar's unkindness by benefit; and surprizing him, perhaps, out of his killing reserve, by the joyful emotion with which he would himself be moved.

Since the Comtesse d'Enghien's public engagement with the happy de Longueville, she had kept steady to her friendly compact with Clarence, from time to time, apprizing him of the progress made by the young queen in her attempts to incline her consort to the gracious act they both wished; and Clarence was, therefore, privileged to hope as he did. The excuses he still imagined for his friend's reserve to him were manifold; but he found none for his manner. If generous motives actuated him, not caprice or unwarranted suspicion of his affection, would not a show of more obvious kindness have tried to overbalance the evidence of a confidence withheld? Clarence, as he dwelt upon this question, could no longer deceive himself; and when he encountered Adhemar, ever surrounded now by companions, — assuredly by design, — no cordial kindling of countenance answered to the affectionate light in his. Not an accidental meeting

of their eyes, once so familiar with each other's expressions, spoke of sympathy. Adhemar was so changed, indeed, that his person covered with a shroud, as he passed and repassed before his heart-stricken friend, could scarcely have been a more distressing object. Clarence felt that he could not long endure the anguish of such alteration; that he must quit the scene of his piecemeal torments, or at once end conjecture by explanation and certainty. Every moment now might bring him a summons from England, and carry him hence with present feelings unappeased. Yet how was he ever to appease them? Adhemar resolutely denied him an opportunity of enquiry, and he was become too proud to ask one: day after day, hour after hour, were running away like the sand in a time-glass, and he had not power to stay their swift wasting. Meanwhile the delicacy and generosity natural to honourable affection of every species, deterred him from

breathing a single expression to the Prince de Condé, which might look like complaint against his nephew: and it was only to Maligny, the prince's secretary, that he indulged himself in a half-confidence.

Maligny's qualities of mind and heart were sterling: his active benevolence was more valuable than a sensibility of more seducing softness, for it did not prevent him from preserving cheerfulness in the midst of sincere sympathy. Without appearing to notice the feelings of those around him, (so careless was he of a reputation for kindness,) he contrived to give them cheering, or encouragement, or amusement, as their peculiar state of feelings required; and if they confided their griefs to him, he served them more effectually. Confidence might gratify, but reserve never displeased him. This excellent young man saw Clarence's unhappiness, and soon divined its cause; and, as if by accident, frequently informed

him where his estranged friend might be found. He guessed something was wrong between them, and he thought nothing but an explanation was wanting to do it away.

Clarence, however, became unwell; and seizing the excuse illness afforded, of alternately brooding over regrets, and imagining grounds for better thoughts, he shut himself up in his apartments. Nothing could excuse the nominal friend (for de Bourbon yet bore that name) from visiting his sick chamber: Adhemar's own heart, indeed, smote him at the news of his indisposition, and he went to see him. But Condé and Coligny were with him; and some remark of the queen-mother's about the new *engouement* of Willoughby for Maligny, had soured his humour. The first shock of finding his friend's hand lifeless within his warm grasp, nearly overcame Clarence's sense of propriety, and he was on the point of uttering an exclamation

against such a mockery of kindness as such a visit; when recollecting in whose presence they were, he turned away his head, and regarded Adhemar no more. Clarence loved fondly, not weakly, all that he did love: he was no spaniel, to fawn upon the hand that spurned him. The heart has its power of fevering us into strength; or resentment really medicined Clarence; for the next day he was walking abroad. The queen said, he had *acted* illness.

Catherine de Medicis now appeared in public, resuming her former habits of splendid and expensive pageantry. The young queen seemed determined to eclipse the richness and fancies of her entertainments; so that in spite of the king's creeping maladies, and the public misery, balls and banquets went on as usual at court. Frivolous amusements were become distasteful to Clarence; and believing Adhemar de Bourbon as little likely to relish them as himself, he

sought them not, on his account. But there was a masque in prospect at the queen-mother's, where Maligny learnt de Bourbon would certainly appear; and tempted by the probability of snatching a few words apart with his friend, Clarence, after short hesitation, determined to make one in the giddy crowd.

The Prince de Condé refused mixing with the court upon this occasion: for on the very morning of the day, the prorogation of the states-general was formally announced; and he was denied admittance to the king. He then boldly proclaimed his belief that his royal cousin was, in fact, no longer a free agent, since he had thus forfeited his sacred word: and Condé then declared his purpose of calling the loyal people of France together, to consider what steps ought to be taken by the princes of the blood, for the liberation of their sovereign, and the execution of the laws. In private he spoke with greater violence and free-

dom; repeatedly assuring those about him, that unless the Counsellor de Bourg were delivered from his imprisonment in Paris, before three days were over, he would quit Blois, hasten to Gascony, and there endeavour to make his brother proclaim open war with the faction of Lorraine. While uttering these just menaces, he was startled, perhaps agreeably surprized, to hear his nephew confess that a bolt of vengeance was already forged, and that his hand might wield it, if he chose to be the avenger. Adhemar took from his breast a plan of the confederacy, with the names of the principal members, which Renaudie had just given him for the queen-mother; and bidding his uncle study and decide upon it, during the hours the Chevalier must go to render an account to one, concerned deepest in its success, he quitted him abruptly for the palace of his faithless ally. How little did he imagine then that he was moved, like the senseless pieces on a chess-board

where every move is determined, and the whole game calculated! How little did he suspect that the able mover was Catherine de Medicis — the great looker-on, Guise himself!

Desperately wound up to any hazard for public benefit, and now completely dead to his own, Adhemar de Bourbon repaired to the magnificent palace of Chambord — that boast of Gothic architecture! — Clarence Willoughby was already there; resolute to make this night, the seal or cancelling of their friendship. — The strong pulsations of his heart, marked every passing minute, and passing guest, with the fidelity of a clock to time: he turned at every step, hoping it were Adhemar's; yet how well he knew his tread! Why then did he seek to cheat himself? Many of the company wore fantastic habits and masks: one of those persons obviously regarded Clarence with great attention; advanced, retreated, hovered round him, yet spake

not. It could not be Adhemar; for the figure was cast in a slighter mould, and the hair clustering from the cap, was of as ardent a brown as Clarence's own. Seeing himself observed, this person made a hasty signal to be followed, and reassuming an air of carelessness, went loiteringly forward towards another yet unoccupied saloon. Clarence would have obeyed the invitation, had he not been checked by the fear of missing Adhemar's entrance, the moment he believed most favourable for challenging him to private discourse; and what had Clarence to do with any other interest at such a time? He smiled disdainful of himself, returning to the station whence he had advanced a few steps.

The mask re-appeared. "Will you not allow me a moment's speech with you?" whispered a voice, Clarence was certain he had heard before, but whether in reality or in a dream, he knew not: its tone was persuasive. The unhappy

heart — at least in its early days of suffering — is strangely prone to think that every unknown circumstance brings it solace or help: thought of Adhemar, of his dear father, of Aigline, at once crowded into his mind, and yielding to the arm that impelled him, he went to a part of the largest hall, remote from the gathering company. The mask then paused; and turning his face full towards Clarence, lifted its covering for a single instant. During the succeeding few minutes, Clarence's recollections were only more confused by this glimpse of a face to which he could not give a name: yet it was a face to remember. Piercing intellect and lively sensibility, shone through features distinguished rather by a look of nobility than of beauty. The person unconsciously heaved a short sigh, while Clarence was considering his height and make, and the sound, or the manner of the sigh, touched the chord of memory. The astonishing truth

flashed upon him at once. He was by the side of the living man whom he thought he had heard breathe his last on the heath of Etienne. The expressive grasp of this person, checked Clarence's exclamation: at that moment, the English ambassador was passing them, and the stranger suffered him to reach a remoter part of the room, ere he spoke again; it was then with a lower and more interestingly-agitated voice than before. — "My gratitude," he said, "would not be resisted. — I must — I must thank you for having saved my life — joyless as it is like to be now! — those good monks contrived to re-animate my blood-drained body; and here it is, sworn to do you service, whenever you require it. If such a moment ever arrive," he added, increasing in agitation and earnestness, "whatever be the extremity, wherever you may be, I charge you, — I implore you, cause this ring to reach *my* queen here; she will make the summons find

me, if I am above ground.—I would not be wanting to you in that hour, though it were to secure my dearest hopes!—I may serve—exalt,"—he paused, then added,—"I *may* ruin you!—God forbid the last!" He grasped Clarence's hand tightly, as he broke off somewhat abruptly; and his eyes speaking through the openings of the mask he wore, were evidently suffused by some extraordinary emotion. Ere Clarence could rouse from the bewilderment of faculties into which this address threw him, the stranger had vanished; nor did he re-appear again.

Astonished, interested, perplexed, as Clarence was by the apparition of this person, and vexed as he was at having no time allowed him to press for permission to confide the whole adventure to Adhemar, whose confidence had first been shaken by that concealment, he had not much leisure to bestow on such regrets his business was with Adhemar alone,

whose entrance he hastened back to watch for, but had the mixed pleasure and mortification of seeing him already in the room surrounded by company.

De Bourbon was negligently habited, where all were gorgeous, matching the deep sadness of his countenance by the dark character of his habiliments. His look indeed was sad to desolation:—'twas a countenance withered! — Once in the tumultuous gaiety of those about them, Clarence heard him sigh; the sound thrilled dismally through all his veins. De Bourbon recovered from the momentary abstraction, during which this sighed escaped him, but not with his former ability: a dejected expression still remained in his rayless eyes, and upon his brow: that dignified reservedness was gone from both, which had so often awed the mad spirits of Clarence, even in their happiest day of confident affection. — Alas! he was thinking of those days!

Disarmed thus of its terrors, Adhemar's altered aspect, and the sigh Clarence heard him draw, caused such a gush of tenderness in the latter's breast, that but for witnesses, he must have thrown himself upon his friend's neck, careless of repulse, offering to pour out his life's-blood, if need were, to heal his griefs. The Chevalier either did not, or would not see him; for he moved forwards with some persons that joined him, pausing, as if in mere absence of mind, before an exhibition of slights of hand. Clarence swiftly insinuated himself through the increasing throng, till he got near enough to Adhemar, to pull him softly by the sleeve; for at the instant, he could not articulate. "Forward, my lord, if you please!" exclaimed the Chevalier, addressing a nobleman with him, — "I am pressed on!" — For the first few moments after this, Clarence knew not whether he thought the slighting exclamation intentional or accidental. It might be

either. If it were the former, what could atone for it? If the latter, was an egregious pride to help in stabbing both himself and his friend? True affection is, in such cases, ever between straits: they only escape them, who never love any thing so dearly as themselves! — Clarence had something to subdue in himself, ere he was able to breathe, and go on: he did so, however; resolving to seize the first opportunity of approaching without attracting extraordinary notice, and positively insisting upon an explanation of foregone unkindness. Whilst following and watching Adhemar for this purpose, he observed the English ambassador make his way to him, and whisper a long time in his ear: whatever it was, it changed the desolated expression of de Bourbon's countenance into sudden wrathfulness; the angry fire blazed up one moment to sink into gloom the next. Some musicians were at the same period executing a piece of music,

accompanied by words. The last stanza of the song seemed to catch the attention of the Chevalier, for he looked towards the singer; Clarence listened too, and distinctly heard these words: —

What tho' thy perfidy's keen dart
Yet quivers in this breast of mine,
I would not give my weltering heart,
For all the reckless joy of thine!

That heart will scorn, (when it shall heal,)
The hand that took such coward aim;
While festering over thine, must steal
The burning sense of guilt and shame!

As the last notes of the singer rang in the ears of the listeners, de Bourbon turned determinately round upon Clarence, with a glance rapid and fierce as a flaming sword; then smiling disdainfully, though his brow still threatened, took the arm of a companion, and walked into the room appointed for the masque.

Clarence was at first transfixed with

that terrible look; then awaking all at once, and disregarding every thing around him, was rushing forward to stay his friend, when Maligny forcibly withheld him, recalling him to a sense of where he was.

"Some rare villainy is at the bottom of this," said the latter, entering with kind familiarity into his confidence. Clarence did not, could not answer: his throat, his heart, every artery in his body seemed bursting. For many minutes he could only return Maligny's pressures of the hand, by convulsive graspings of his; while he tried to devour those hot tears which threatened to choke or to disgrace him. His considerate companion had gradually withdrawn him from the great throng of company; but many eyes were attracted by his struggling movements.

"I cannot command myself," he said at last; "I must begone. Maligny! Maligny! never love mistress or friend

as I have loved that man!" and breaking from Maligny's hold, he disappeared among the assemblage of people entering the first saloon.

Maligny rightly judged that Clarence, after this evening, would place full confidence in him; enabling him thus to act between him and the Chevalier, whom respect must otherwise deter Maligny from interrogating. Trusting that success would attend his mediation, and quite sure there must be some mischief-maker in the affair, he thought it best to leave Clarence to his own guidance for the remainder of the night, while he made it his business to observe the conduct and countenance of de Bourbon; and with this amiable view he remained.

Clarence meanwhile hurried from the blazing rooms of the palace into the first humble and vacant one he saw; it was a buttery of the inferior officers, and they were away on their different duties. He cast himself upon a bench there, and

resting his throbbing head upon the table beside it, allowed his anguish of soul to gush forth in scalding tears. The strength of his nature was completely subdued; tired out, by the excitement and struggle of so many feelings as this night's incidents had roused: but all that related to the mysterious foreigner, was only remembered in its effect: he could think of nothing, except Adhemar de Bourbon, and the withering look he had cast upon him.

Clarence could not doubt that Adhemar suspected him of perfidy; nay, had determined him guilty; of what, he knew not. Yet he had never given him an opportunity of clearing himself of the imputed crime. Was this conduct like that of a friend? Was it not rather that of a person, loving, only because they are first worshipped; and indignant, not sorrowful, when the truth, or the ardor of their idolater, is made doubtful?

"I *was* idolatrous of thee, Adhemar!"

he exclaimed, "and I have my reward!" —Then resuming, as fresh tides of grief swelled his heart, "Yet I thought it justified by your character and my own obligations! Did my youthful enthusiasm for all that is indeed admirable, deserve this heavy punishment? What, what have I done, good God! to make it necessary for my whole remaining life to be laid waste, as it is now!"

All at once Clarence stopped, recollecting a passage in a discourse he had lately heard, on the subject of faithless friends. The preacher had asked, "What right sinful man had to exclaim against instability and ingratitude, when the Saviour himself, was denied by Peter and betrayed by Judas?"

Clarence's murmurs sunk to silence at this recollection; it could not stifle his regrets. Rejected by Aigline; disappointed in his vivid expectation of immediate station and usefulness, and afflicted by the supposition, that his

friend's attachment had been only self-love disguised, he felt that his heart had been duped of its warmest affections, by objects comparatively valueless; and that the whole world was disenchanted to him. Nothing but his father remained in it, worth a single effort more!

For a long time his mind was a perfect chaos of miserable thoughts; but as the perturbation of his faculties subsided, judgment recovered its power, and his ideas fell into some degree of order. He then admitted, that in condemning his friend unheard, he was deciding as unjustifiably as de Bourbon himself had done in his case: he ought to see and question him, and state every one of his own feelings, ere he thus hastily concluded that he was cruel without apparent cause.

It was true, Adhemar had hitherto avoided enquiry; shrouding his altered sentiments under evasiveness and awing reserve: now he courted it: that deter-

mined look had surely accused Clarence, and challenged him to vindication!

At this conclusion, hope dawned on our hero's soul, and he ran over various modes of obtaining the explanation he sought. Maligny's kind agency, and patient good humour, seemed to point him out as the fittest person for conducting a business, which might require great forbearance of temper and tediousness of investigation: but he was not sufficiently upon an equality with Adhemar, who could always remember, when he chose it, that he was a Bourbon, and the Vicomte de Limoges. The Prince de Condé appeared then the only proper person; and Clarence therefore came to the resolution of stating their situation to him, and placing judgment in his hand. Pride ceased to influence him; he had wedded his heart to Adhemar, from the hour in which he saved his life amongst the Pyrenees; and both gratitude and af-

fection, at this moment, claimed his unshrinking exertion to preserve the union there formed.

Reanimated by so joyful an expectation, and determining to see Condé ere he slept, he rose at the entrance of some serving-men, and regardless of cold or covering, took the shortest way out of the palace, leaving thus his mantle and flambeau in the hall, unreclaimed.

Soon after Clarence disappeared from the entertaining-rooms, Maligny was met by the Comtesse d'Enghien, who enquired eagerly if he had seen the Chevalier Willoughby?

The peculiar animation of her modest aspect, subsided into chagrin when she heard he was gone away; but smiling on the Duke de Longueville as she withdrew her arm from his, she returned to a groupe of masked characters, one of whom, by her step and exquisite shape, Maligny knew to be the queen of France and Scotland. Some time afterwards,

he observed that the latter, in her mask of a gipsy, was conversing with the Chevalier de Bourbon, apart from the crowd. She was, perhaps, only affecting to tell his fortune, while speaking of more interesting subjects; for her mysterious whisperings, were accompanied by such brilliant expressions in her eyes, as proved that what she said, animated and delighted herself.

What feelings it awakened in her companion, Maligny could not in the least understand; they appeared so little to harmonize with her joyfulness. De Bourbon's cheek was first pale, and then red; now pale again; and then paler still: once he started with a sort of gasp, and looked round wildly, as if seeking some one; but returned his eyes and his attention, the next moment, solely to the queen: while she continued to speak, stronger and stronger tremblings shook his whole frame; and at the conclusion, he bowed his head upon the

fair fingers which lightly held his open palm, muttering some inaudible words: these, coupled with a sort of bending movement of the knee, seemed intended to express gratitude. Whatever it meant, he soon rose from the momentary action, and bounded away, with a countenance of such strong and singular expression, that Maligny's penetration was completely baffled by it. Hoping, however, that its mixture of eager expectancy, and strange denunciation, boded good, rather than harm, he saw the Chevalier dart down the long vista of gorgeous saloons, without pretending to follow him. He trusted that he went in pursuit of Willoughby.

De Bourbon's spirit was indeed released from the fatal spell that bound it: his conference with Mary of Scotland, had let in light upon one part of his friend's conduct, which promised blessed clearance of the darkness hanging over others. Mary had obtained the long-

sought grace from her consort; her suit having been forwarded by the interference of that unknown, whose life and papers Clarence had saved.

The king's gracious intention was to be publicly announced the next day to his ministers; Mary having concealed the whole transaction from her uncles; both because she feared their counter-influence even with herself; and because the affair was unknown to them, which caused her debt of gratitude to the Chevalier's friend.

Disappointed of communicating it first to Clarence, youthful feelings were too strong in her, to be denied the gratification of imparting her success to its prime object. She told it to Adhemar, with expressions, which proved that she estimated his character highly, and wished to conciliate one of the Bourbons, at least.

When de Bourbon learnt that his friend's private correspondence with

Comtesse d'Enghien, was to urge this coveted boon for him, and that Clarence's right to urge it, arose from an important service accidentally rendered by him, and the nature of which he was ignorant of;—when de Bourbon learnt this, a sense of his own credulity, suspicion and unkindness, smote him with remorse and shame; then came recollection of his deep share in designs which were meant to strike at the lives and fortunes of Mary's kindred! How to withdraw, when conscience pronounced them right and lawful, and the Guises tyrants, not only of his country, but of his sovereign!—no! he could not withdraw from those designs:—away then with thought of this toy, this feather, which he had gratefully acknowledged, without accepting! He had learned, perhaps too late, to hold all things cheap, save honor and true attachment. Clarence Willoughby was the great object of his present solicitude. One portion of his friend's sus-

pected character was cleared: but how to unmask those appearances that deformed other parts of Clarence's conduct! — such as the mutilated information given to the Duke de Guise? — Adhemar paused not on this question: in the present whirl and tempest of his feelings, he only sought the immediate satisfaction of conversation with the queen-mother. Instant suspicion of her sincerity had flashed on him: she had too assiduously pointed every doubt against Clarence, not to have some hand or some interest in shaping the darts. — Reviving affection, awaking from its death-like trance with tenfold strength, gave the Chevalier power to resolve upon the mastery of outward emotion in this conjuncture. It was necessary to conceal what had just passed, and was now passing within him, if he would draw from Catherine, a regular statement of Clarence's supposed offences, with the proofs said to substantiate them; that

done, he might then fathom the grounds of the English ambassador's warnings, and his whispered assurance this night; the time was past for supineness, originating in despair; rekindling hope demanded exertion.

Adhemar had come to this idle entertainment by appointment with the queen-mother: she had promised to await him in the private apartments, to which he knew the mode of unsuspected entrance, so soon as her royal daughter-in-law's departure should release her from ceremony with her other guests. He meant to have discoursed with her there, solely upon his recent communication to his uncle; but now determined to withhold every new confidence, until she had satisfactorily explained her peculiar hostility to his friend; and fearful of losing a single moment in doing so, he hastened into a side apartment (unoccupied by any one) where he was accustomed to go by a concealed door,

of which a key had been given him, to his conferences with Catherine. Intent upon his purpose, he lifted the arras in such a hurry of spirits, that he had but just time to drop it over his figure, ere two persons entered, closing the door carefully by which they came. It was now impossible for him to escape from the ignominious station in which accident had placed him,—that of a listener; for coming forth, must either have betrayed his secret understanding with the queen-mother, or injured the fame of some of her beautiful attendants;—he could not proceed through the private door without turning the key, and the sound of that would unavoidably cause his detection; he was forced, therefore, to remain.

Few situations could be more wounding to a man of honour and delicacy; and Adhemar de Bourbon felt its painfulness to actual torment; but soon the startling discussions and amazing ini-

quity to which he became privy, banished every other consideration except themselves. The persons to whom he listened thus unavoidably, were no others than Catherine herself and one of her new allies, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who was not yet fully informed of all her windings in the subtle track she professed to have entered from the first, with the most zealous affection for her son's self-appointed guardians. This conference completely unveiled the treachery of the one, the pitiless policy of the other, and the total innocence of Clarence: the only mystery Catherine could not fathom in Willoughby, was exactly that to which the young queen had furnished a solution. The various means and instruments Catherine had used to pervert the judgment of Adhemar, were not minutely described; but what these were, it mattered not; when Adhemar distinctly learnt that his friend had been systematically traduced and his life

hunted, solely from his devotedness to him, and to high-wrought principle,—what was his emotion, when he heard too, that every member of Rénaudie's confederacy, together with his uncle Condé, were to be involved in instant ruin, the moment Adhemar had assured the queen-mother of Condé's union with them; and of the assent of one or two equally abhorred by the faction to which she was now sold!

The intemperate cardinal was importunate for immediate seizure of Condé, upon the single testimony of Beaurevoir; since Catherine asserted that the latter would now swear to the prince's having been in the granary in the Classon; and one of her creatures suborned thence, would swear to most treasonable views in that meeting: she, however, preached the policy of delay, calculating the additional number of victims it would produce, and the immense advantage of learning all the secrets of the new

members, through the distempered sensibility of Adhemar de Bourbon. She spoke of his strangely-wrought character, as invaluable in the hands of such as herself; professing herself sanguine of extirpating both heresy and irreverent judgment of high authorities, provided she might once rid herself completely of Clarence Willoughby, whose possible recovery of de Bourbon's confidence, was the only circumstance likely to baffle her *righteous purposes.* "That meddling visionary taken away," she said, "I can move Limoges, by his master-passion, at will."

"Fear him no longer then," the cardinal answered, with a cold carelessness that froze de Bourbon's blood; "Mirecourt has never digested the affront put upon him in sight of the whole court; he scorns to measure weapons deliberately with such a groom:—so an honest fellow or two, that heed not how they earn them a purse, will take care of him

to-night. — As master Willoughby passes under the cedars of the oratory, in his way home, he will be dealt with — he wears no rapier, you know, as yet; so, if he were a good catholic, we might say, God rest his soul! — Mirecourt won't let his own return take air, till this deed is done; and I have engaged to let no stir be made about it."

The queen-mother's reply was worthy the devilish spirit that twelve years afterwards prompted the massacre of St. Bartholomew: as she uttered it, Adhemar de Bourbon felt for his sword; — respect for majesty, regard for sex, ruth for an unprepared soul, were all driven from his breast: — he expected the queen to lift the arras with the intent of proceeding to her apartments, and he was sternly prepared to stab her to the heart on the instant. Drunk with so many wrongs, he thought but to avenge the misery she had caused to Clarence and himself; happily other voices were

heard, the outer door opened, and Catherine once more mingling with a crowd, escaped unconsciously from destruction.

The flux and reflux of persons entering from mere impulse to follow those that had pushed open the door from idle curiosity alone, fortunately left Adhemar time to recal his better self. He was naturally merciful, and habitually alive to religious impressions; and as he saw how narrowly he had escaped the guilt and remorse of having murdered a fellow-creature, and a woman, in cold blood, he shuddered at the danger, and blessed heaven for deliverance from it. But Clarence's perfect acquittal, transported him nearly to madness of joy! Yes! Adhemar loved Clarence; for he rejoiced more at the proofs of his innocence, than he shrunk from the pain and humiliation of confessing his own culpability. For a moment he imagined himself at the feet—in the par-

doning embrace of that much-enduring friend: and this imagination was the first blissful one de Bourbon's heart had admitted for many, many weeks. But suddenly recollecting the danger that menaced Clarence's life, he broke from under the arras, with the look and haste of a disordered man, and pushing indifferently past all that came in his way, hurried to the entrance hall.

In this hall the servants of the palace, and the pages of the guests, waited in charge of the cloaks and masks of such as walked home. He was overjoyed to see Clarence's still lying there; and turning back to seek him in the entertaining rooms, encountered Maligny on the staircase; in answer to his hasty interrogatory, Maligny assured him that his friend had gone above an hour before; and in such evident distress of mind, that it was not surprizing, he observed, that he should forget to protect himself from the night air. De

Bourbon threw Clarence's mantle over his own shoulders at this information, and hurrying Maligny into the outer court, abruptly asked him, if he would hazard life to save Clarence Willoughby, and serve him? — Maligny's prompt assurance of readiness to serve any honest man, confirmed the purpose of Adhemar. Catherine de Medicis had just made the former's eulogium, by noting him down for destruction, and aware that whether he died in Clarence's stead, or in his defence, he would be leaving his confederated associates in the fangs of the tyger, unless some one were left master of the important secret, Adhemar resolved to trust Maligny fully. Every moment was now precious, and as they hurried along towards the crystal current of the Classon, which here waters the park of Chambord, the astonished Maligny received a full, though compressed detail of all the Chevalier had done, and suffered, and been be-

trayed into, for the last four months. His promise was speedily given, to act as was necessary towards Rénaudie and the Prince de Condé. Rénaudie and the other confederates might choose to save themselves in foreign countries; or the prince, roused to greater indignation by the perfidious policy of the reigning faction, might choose to head and hasten the enterprize; a plan likely to prove successful even now. — At any rate, it was Adhemar's duty, to let each of them know the danger his misplaced confidence had created around them; and Maligny listened attentively to all he said, believing he was hereafter to act in concert with the Chevalier.

To preserve Clarence from the destruction threatening him was the present object; it was very possible that he had not left the palace; was, perhaps, merely wandering about its gardens: if so, de Bourbon and his companion might reach the spot they meant to walk openly to

and fro in (so to dare the attack, or drive away the lurkers,) ere Clarence arrived; but if he were actually gone from Chambord, they hoped the early hour of his departure might have saved him, and he have passed securely before the murderers were come to their station. At any rate, there seemed no better mode of acting than going forward. Returning to seek him at Chambord, would be giving him up to certain death, (provided he had still to pass,) as, in obedience to Queen Mary's sentence, he yet went about without a sword;—and there were various ways across the park to the same point, one of which he might be approaching by. The night was gusty; and as a sweep of the blast extinguished the torch Maligny had caught up in the hall of the palace, de Bourbon stopt: "Ah! that horrid wind!" he exclaimed with a shudder. Maligny fancied him disturbed at their loss of light, and remarked upon it ac-

cordingly: but Adhemar was thinking of the dismal night in which Lólotte died. The wind had never blown rudely since, without renewing those horrid thrills. To a superstitious man, the blast now, might have sounded like a warning of his own death: but Adhemar noticed it not again, passing on in haste and silence.

Nothing seemed stirring in the park and meadows beyond the little river, except themselves; and as they were now without the aid of a torch, they had no stronger light to guide them, than what the moon and stars afforded. These, however, glittered on the embroidered mantle of Maligny, and made the plain scarlet cloak of Clarence, in which the Chevalier was wrapt, peculiarly distinguishable. Struck with this circumstance, and believing the danger connected with it had escaped his companion's notice, Maligny hastily exclaimed, "My lord, you will be mistaken for Willoughby,

for God's sake throw off that cloak!"—De Bourbon turned his face towards him without speaking; — never had its dark beauty been ennobled by such expression. Maligny comprehended instantly that he wished to lay down his life for his friend. After a moment's silence, he combated such an intention with reasonable earnestness. De Bourbon made light of the advice. "I am better armed than you;" he said, glancing on his sword, and an ornamental dagger besides; "and I have dragged you into the danger: is it not right, therefore, that I should attract the best half of it, to my own person? — But they must be stouter hearted than assassins ordinarily are, if two honest men like us, are not a match for half a score such miscreants as them. — Would to heaven Mirecourt himself may be amongst them!" — De Bourbon said this almost gaily; but immediately returning to discourse of what he wished known by

his friend, and said to his friend, he showed evidently, that darker forebodings, or more sinister intents were in his mind. They went on meanwhile, crossing those meadows which led direct to the suspicious oratory; and keeping that in their eye,—with what deceit and treachery was it not associated in Adhemar's thoughts!—they dreamt not of attack ere they should reach it.

Thus unprepared, while passing a thicket of dwarf pine, they were suddenly rushed upon by two ruffians; their swords were out the next instant. At sight of weapons, the men, taken by surprize, were equally startled, and defended themselves ill. The impatient humour which had brought them to a station nearer Chambord, than the oratory, would have proved fatal to themselves, had not a third villain started from the same thicket, suddenly burying his poniard in the back of the Chevalier.—De Bourbon fell to the ground with a

cry. The assassins might then have finished their work with Maligny, all amazed as he was with grief and horror, had not the sound of some person or persons running towards them from a side path, and calling out as they ran, warned them to fly: they thought indeed their work was done; and staying not to see what number was approaching, took to flight, (bleeding as they were,) in an opposite direction.

Breathless and eager, yet little imagining whose was the mortal cry that had pierced his ear, and started him out of the deep meditations in which he had been involved till he had lost himself,—Clarence, for it was he, ran forward, unarmed as he was, to assist or learn the extremity of the sufferer. He arrived at the fatal spot, only to behold under the ghastly moonshine, his friend supported by Maligny, and weltering in his blood.

Uttering a distracted appeal, he cast himself on the ground beside him, for-

getting every thing but their former love. Adhemar, knowing his voice, and finding his head transferred to his breast from Maligny's, lifted his heavy lids and looked up at him in silence. The shock and anguish of his wound took away the power of speech: his fingers tried to return the grasp of his friend's; but their strength was gone. Maligny was endeavouring to staunch the deadly welling of his wound; he looked at him, and from him to Clarence, with an expression that seemed to say, "he will tell you all;" then made a movement with his lips and hands, which evidently confessed offence, and besought forgiveness.

"Am I not to hear his voice?" Clarence franticly exclaimed at this. "O, my God, let him but speak to me! — Adhemar, — dear friend," — he added passionately, folding his arms round his body with the force of despair, — "you have no offences against me: I, I only have been to blame! — I have been hot —

resentful — and I see some villain has dealt between us! — O that my worthless life could purchase —"

As he broke off, the Chevalier's dying features overspread with the light of conscious, completed sacrifice. "When you shall hear the manner of my death," he said at last, a smile of tender satisfaction accompanying the spirit-like whispering of his voice, "take it as the only proof left your unhappy friend to show repentance; do not grudge it me, my Clarence! — do not mourn it: — even your love could never have made life what it had been: — cherish Maligny — and despise not — " He stopt abruptly — then added hurryingly, — "I may but bid you speak to me again — say you forgive ——"

In the agony of his spirit, Clarence answered he knew not what: but the tears, the sighs, the groans that interrupted his speech, delaying those assurances of affection and forgiveness which

Adhemar's soul waited for, spoke more than the words themselves.

The Chevalier's body, increasing in heaviness, had gradually sunk down from the support of his two attendants, until his head lay nearly flat upon the turf: making a powerful effort, he stretched his arms up to his friend, encircling his neck with them; then raising himself a little more, by a second exertion, brought his lips close to those of Clarence; fixed on them one earnest kiss, and sunk back upon the ground.

Clarence threw himself down as low, to return this tender proof of dying love. As he stooped his face for that purpose, the Chevalier directed the last glimmer of his eyes to him alone, faintly murmuring, "I die in hope through Christ — lay me beside Lolótte: or in Escalette!" he then closed those eyes, never to open them again, save in the light of heaven.

The grief of one so young, so passionate in all his affections as Clarence was;

of one that recovered his friend, at the very instant in which he was destined to lose him again, may be conceived by every compassionate heart; but cannot, perhaps ought not, to be painted in description.

Maligny, — for Clarence fixed to his friend's lifeless body, was now a blank— his heart, one still, deep, dark sea of sorrow — Maligny procured assistance from some of the park-keepers lodges; removed the dead and the mourner to the residence of his master; and having seen both deposited in the chamber of the latter, in the midst of astonished and heart-struck domestics, hastened to seek the prince, even in his bed, and awaken him with the dismal tidings.

What passed between Maligny and Condé on the subject of national wrong, and individual turpitude, is of little importance to a private annal: history itself is doubtful of the prince's share in the after-events of this period. At present he thought but of fulfilling the most

anxious wish of his nephew; which was, that a moment should not be lost in acquainting Rénaudie with the queen-mother's perfidy, and the purpose of her new allies to leave all things undisturbed, until more important victims were ensnared.

Rénaudie might think fit to profit by this information, and foil Catherine at her own weapons: since she could not be aware that her iniquity had unveiled itself to de Bourbon, or that his death had been other than the consequence of a blunder in the Comte de Mirecourt and his creatures.

From this conference, Maligny went out instantly and privily, to take horse for Frédoniere, where Rénaudie was seen hovering; and Condé to seek the mournful chamber of his young equerry.

His own sorrow was strong and sincere; but the deeper desolation of Clarence, whom he found seated by the bed, watching Adhemar as though he slept, smo-

thered every selfish consideration, and he applied himself rather to comfort him, than to be comforted.

Clarence listened in submissive, tearless silence: his cold hand clasping the colder one of Adhemar, and his dimmed eye as immovable as the motionless features it was fixed on. "It is comforting to note," continued Condé, trying to give a cheerful tone to his faltering voice, — "the smile of those lips, — it proves that his last feeling was a happy one!"

Clarence's lip quivered for an instant; — the convulsive motion ceased, and returned again — then ceased a second time. Blessed benevolence, which, coming like kindly dew, descends only to rise again to the heaven from which it falls, now reanimated Condé's drooping exertions! His generous nature thought it not shame to let Clarence's grief take place of his; and continuing his attempt at softening and consoling, he added,

"Maligny told me, he died in Christian hope; and in full sense of your unchanged love to him."

Clarence lifted his brimming eyes to the face of the kind prince at this remark; the first blood that had visited his cheek, since the moment he beheld his friend weltering on the ground, now suffusing it with repeated tides, as joy and anguish wrestled within him. Condé sat down beside him, thinking this the best moment for relating what Maligny was charged by Adhemar to repeat; and averting his own eyes from a sight which unmanned him as he looked on it, succinctly narrated every circumstance detailed by Maligny.

Condé expected to excite in Clarence such horror and indignation as he had himself felt when told the iniquity of the cold-blooded queen: he expected also to stir him—faintly indeed—with pleasure, by the certainty that de Bourbon died with the knowledge of his successful en-

deavour to procure for him the dignity he coveted; but he feared, yet wished to reach the last passage of this piteous history, de Bourbon's joyful sacrifice of himself. He could neither conceal, nor in the least disguise, this affecting circumstance; since it was demanded by Adhemar's memory, and by Clarence's yearning after every testimony of his friend's return to perfect confidence.

Hitherto Clarence had sat in perfect stillness, different emotions only lightning at intervals over his features, as they were severally excited by the prince's eventful recital; but at the mention of his cloak; the catastrophe consequent upon it, and the fatal notion of expiation it expressed, at once overpowered him, and without uttering cry or sound of any kind, he fell, like one struck dead, across the body of his friend.

Long and dismal was that apparent trance; and when he recovered from it, the stillness of his grief was gone; "the

great deeps were broken up;" and gust after gust — torrent after torrent laid waste his own soul, and those of all that witnessed his sorrow.

Foreseeing a time for himself of immediate and stormy action, in which private grief must be driven like idle chaff before every man, the prince did not long indulge, either as a mourner or comforter: he left Clarence in charge of the respectable de Molleville, who was early summoned to the scene of desolation, and upon whom Condé devolved those duties, which fixing the weeper's eye solely upon the dismal paraphernalia of death, the mattock and the shroud, cloud its gaze after the released and rejoicing spirit.

In obedience to Adhemar's last wish, (undoubting permission) de Molleville was instructed to convey the body, as privately as possible, for interment, to the burial place of the Baron de Roche Blanc. Condé wished to avoid prema-

ture disturbance among the Protestants, who would be ready enough to attribute his brave nephew's assassination to the faction of Lorraine. He was, in fact, prepared, upon the evidence of Maligny, to tax the Comte de Mirecourt himself with the actual murder, and resolved, therefore, to demand justice; for this purpose, amongst others of greater moment, he remained at Blois.

Clarence, when informed of the plan proposed, as he thought of withdrawing from the glare and the turmoil of the court, felt an emotion of pleasure. Home — Aigline — freedom to lament over the spot where his friend would so soon be laid, mingled in that feeling; yet, though sweet and balmy as a chance breath of the south in the dark season of winter, like that it was as quickly followed by gloom and chillness. Withdrawn again into his cloud of sorrowful meditations, he yielded passively to the guidance of de Molleville, inattentive to most out-

ward things; while unremittingly tasking his memory for every look and word of his lost friend, when both were influenced by the falsehood of Catherine de Medicis.

A lock of Lolótte's hair was found upon the Chevalier's heart; Clarence would not suffer it to be removed. When he withheld it from removal — as his hand rested on that cold, still heart, once so warm to him — warm, even in its cruellest passion — his own life seemed passing away; and he must have yielded to the agony, had not Coligny been near him, (come to take a last look at the noble Adhemar) and his pious reasonings, sanctified by veneration for his living illustration of what he taught, enabled Clarence to recover, and submit.

CHAP. X.

LATE in the evening of the second day, the corse of the Chevalier and such of his household as were permitted to attend it, set forward by torch-light for Bearn. The Prince de Condé remained, to demand justice upon the assassin, and insist upon reparation for the execution of the guiltless de Bourg. This unhappy person, in pursuance of Catherine de Medicis' prompting, was now put to death, principally to exasperate the indignant wrath of Condé: that outrage, the murder of Adhemar de Bourbon, the insolent conduct of the Guises, in refusing to accept the single testimony of Maligny, as any ground, even for examination of their

relative, were fast driving things to the point the Lorraine faction sought; and all Blois was in a flame between the two parties, when the hearse of Adhemar quitted its neighbourhood.

Clarence, absorbed by other subjects, was not told any of these circumstances until long after he was on his way to Roche Blanc. His grief was too great for alleviation from ideas of vengeance. Had he witnessed the mortal blow given to his friend, he would have avenged it certainly on the instant, obeying so the impulse (pardonable we may hope) upon such direful occasions. But now, every fiery passion was extinguished — swallowed up in stilling sorrow: and he rode by the side of the heavily-plumed car, rather like the effigy of one appointed to guide and guard it, than as a living, breathing man.

Even in this enfeebled state of mind, the dark hue of his thoughts gradually

softened, and became susceptible of light. He remembered how often he had exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul, when de Bourbon and he lived estranged and apart, that he would rather have had to mourn his friend's actual loss, through the longest, loneliest life, than see him live, and he banished from his heart, and doubtful of his real worthiness! — that awful wish was granted: and had Clarence a right to complain? Providence had seen fit to smite him indeed: — but how mercifully! — Adhemar was torn from life — foully torn — but he died in full conviction of the affection he had so often declared, made the sole charm of his existence! He died devoutly contrite for those sins of weakness against his uncle and his Hugonot brethren, which a deceiver had wrought him to; — and Clarence was not merely allowed the gratification of gaining Adhemar what the latter had coveted through life, but

the dearer privilege of personally pronouncing his friend's pardon for every past unkindness!

They who are now sorrowing over the premature death of a beloved object, may believe their grief without comparison. They know not what they say! The moral death of what we once thought excellent, is the only sorrow for which even religion has no consolation. Her awful voice may but silence complaint.

From this keener anguish, Clarence was rescued; and as his thoughts were more frequently led, by gratitude for this mercy, to recall the early passages of his friendship with Adhemar, and thus to rest securely upon the conviction that his friend's attachment had not been vain mockery, he felt unconsciously the healing power of a conviction which contained in itself a germ of similar dear love, in after days, for some future friend. At present, he contemplated

none other than what he felt for his father.

The imperfect mode in which carriages of every description were constructed in that period, and the great weight of the iron coffin in which the body of Adhemar was laid, caused the mournful cavalcade to be a more than ordinary time in reaching its place of destination. De Molleville had his orders to avoid the direct road; and not to halt in Gascony;—nay, to pass through in privacy, if possible, lest the king of Navarre, dreading the French court's displeasure at the Protestant rites being performed over a Bourbon in his Principality, should see fit to give them hindrance. From these joint circumstances their journey was so protracted, that by the time they entered Gascony, they found the whole country, together with the neighbouring provinces, in a state of tumult. Rumours of the Prince de Condé's arrest, (as the temporary seizure

of his papers was called) had already penetrated to these distant places: many of the Hugonot nobility had rashly flown to arms, ill-intentioned persons swelled the insurrection in the mere hope of gain or plunder—and Anthony Bourbon, menaced with an invasion from Spain under the name of assistance, was forced to declare that he would have none share the honour of putting down the schismatics and rebellious. To deprive Philip of all excuse for filling his country with Spanish soldiers, he called out his own troops, dismissed every Protestant officer, commanded the discontinuance of preachings and meetings for unknown objects, and finally forced himself to appear zealous in a cause which his better conscience spurned. But Anthony was enslaved by sensual passions; and the fair Dalilah's that alternately ruled him, were easily bought by his enemies.

Such a contention of parties made it

impossible for de Molleville to conduct his sad convoy in silence and secrecy to its destination. His person, and that of others in the train, were well-known: — the horse of Adhemar, that had borne him through so many battles, and now followed his body, was recognized on the confines of Limoges, where it had so often pastured. The name of the illustrious dead was then proclaimed; vassals and friends ran to pay the last honours to their master and companion — multitudes of the disaffected joined themselves to the cavalcade; and, by the time it came within sight of the Pyrenees, the certainty of de Bourbon's murder by one of the Lorraine family, had raised such a ferment in every mind, that it seemed incumbent upon the king of Navarre to allay it, by dispersing the people, and staying the hearse. An order to that effect, when the cavalcade halted for decent arraying ere it entered Bearn, was

received with rage and derision by the armed crowd. Threatening destruction to all that opposed them, they reviled the peaceable de Molleville, who was reluctantly going to obey, and fell at once upon the soldiers by whom the order was to be enforced.

This contest was the first event that roused Clarence, and rekindled his former fire. He precipitately left his station by the coffin of his friend, to appear amongst the contending parties, and declare his resolution to fulfil, though with his dearest blood, the promise he had made to the departed hero. That duty acquitted, he would be ready to answer it with his life, if called upon, to the sovereign of Navarre.

Many Pyreneans among the crowd knew the speaker to be Clarence Willoughby, once a resident in their mountains; those of Limoges hailed him as the David of their Jonathan; and even many of the royal soldiers, who had

served in fields where the gallant Adhemar was foremost in glory, remembering his career with admiration, relentingly gave way, declaring that they would no longer give hindrance to any honours intended him. No further molestation was then offered by the civil power, (the Catholic party in Gascony being far inferior to the Protestant one,) and the tumultuous assemblage having gained their point, returned to good order, quietly proceeding to conduct their honored charge to the foot of the Pyrenees.

The happiest of us have scarcely taken a few steps in life, ere Spring becomes painfully associated in our memories with the remembrance of former enjoyments: its mere breath recalls some lost friend or happiness, which, when present, was enhanced in value by the presence of this enchanting season. Such recollections often make us sad, when every other mute or living thing seems joyful. Yet cold must be the

heart, which, for a moment at least, does not swell with sympathetic transport when it beholds nature springing afresh, as it were, from the hands of her Creator, ready to run a new course of life and joy!

Such momentary pleasure, and such enduring pain, were now the portion of Clarence Willoughby as he entered upon the scenes of his early years. When he came in view of the meadows of Roche Blanc, the sight and smell of the numerous flowers with which these beautiful pastures are enamelled, the bleating of the lambs, and the warbling of the larks, at once carried him back to those happy days, when he and Aigline used to gather daisies in these very meadows, — fit emblems of their own childhood! It was now almost summer in the valley; on the heights it was yet early spring. He turned his eye upward to the steeps of his own home, sighing to think how he was about to enter it; but determining

not to do so, until the last rites were paid to his departed friend.

Upon reaching a given station in the village, whence de Molleville, as the most self-possessed, went on his sad embassy to its proprietor, Clarence was ill-prepared for the shock he was destined to sustain there. He found the whole domain of the Baron deserted by its former occupants; his family gone; and the chateau itself in possession of legal officers. De Molleville was obliged to purchase, at a high price, permission to bury the Chevalier in the dead of night, privately; and without other rites than what the soldier, who falls in the field, has said over him by some pious or sorrowing comrade. Clarence would have sought his old friend the pastor of Roche Blanc, confident of obtaining his Christian ministry on this sad occasion; but the good man was gone with his whole flock; driven away by the late severe ordinances of the French court, which

Anthony Bourbon ventured not to resist. Nothing then was left Clarence and de Molleville but to accept the sordid indulgence of the persons occupying the chateau; and, with what solemnity they could, deposit the remains of Adhemar in the vault of the la Marots.

On the night appointed for the interment, as Clarence stood by the opened vault, ere he descended into it, to read over the coffin the service appointed by those of his church for their dead, his eye fell on the tablet inscribed with the name and age of Lolótte; — a withered chaplet of flowers, — winter flowers, — long withered, he thought, were yet hanging there; probably they had been the first, and the last, Aigline's heart had strength to devote thus! On this spot, then, Aigline must have stood, when she came there as the mourner of her unhappy sister. Clarence's eyes glazed with tears of compassionate tenderness;

deeper, direr recollections, suspended those tears.

He then began the solemn ritual, and went through it with only slight variations of voice; though his lips, meanwhile, were whiter than those of the marble semblances of departed knights and barons, which here and there were sculptured on the tombs. At the conclusion of his trying task, he drew the pall over the coffin; and, at that signal, de Molleville and his few companions retired. Left to himself, he clasped the senseless iron in his arms, giving way at once to the full force of his grief. Again and again he called upon the spirit of his friend to appear and renew the compact of their dear affection. More than once he looked up, with senses half-disordered, believing that his unhallowed wish was about to be gratified. But nothing deceived, — nothing startled him even for an instant: — the air in the vault slowly

stirring the velvet of the pall, and the light of a lamp gleaming on its silvery blazonry, was all he saw or heard.

"O, ye pernicious mockeries!" he exclaimed, turning loathing from the insignia of birth and title which decorated the pall, "was it for such as you that the noble Adhemar bartered happiness and life — nay, almost honour!"

His own exclamation recalled one of the Chevalier's last expressions, wherein he assured his friend, that "not even *his* love, could make life what it had been!" Clarence, sadly assenting to this, checked selfish lamentation. Adhemar's disastrous confidence in the queen-mother, and concealment from his uncle, he well knew might even yet occasion ruin to the patriotic purposes of the best and bravest in France: and, had he lived, it might have tarnished all his early honours, by fixing on him the suspicion of having wilfully betrayed his party. Many were then the serious reflections which, one

by one, arose in the mind of Clarence: they were lessons for future years; teaching every passion to curb itself at the first check of conscience or of reason; marking the superiority of moral courage over all that is most admirable in personal daring, or sublime in speculation; and convincing him that Adhemar, as he had truly said, was not born for happiness. In his last discourse with Maligny, de Bourbon had avowed and bewailed the vice of his nature, — that strange mixture of distrust and credulity, which would ever scatter the seeds of misery around him. His character, compounded of strength and feebleness, of greatness and littleness, — was, indeed, too far below the imaginings of the better spirit within him, not to make him consider death as emancipation from a bondage that spirit contemned.

Let us hope that he was right: and that in another state of being, his errors in this, would be forgiven; that con-

sideration of the evils of his birth, and the consequent imperfection of an education without parental plan or guidance, would soften the testimony of his accusing angel!

Clarence did not scrutinize his friend's conduct alone; he reverted to his own with sorrowful condemnation. It was evident, from what had occurred lately, that half the evils of the past were the product of his inconsiderate pledge to a stranger, and of the dazzling prospect afterwards opened by it, of promoting his friend's dearest wish. Clarence thought he might find an excuse, in the circumstances of the case, for his hasty promise to a dying man; but he condemned himself for not having terminated his share in a business, of which he was ignorant, at the delivery of the unlucky packet. He knew that romantic zeal had urged him on at first: but afterwards, the proud hope of avenging unkindness by benefit. Had he not yielded to these

motives, and had he taken care to avoid the false reputation of actual indiscretion by marked guardedness of speech and action, his enemies would have had no footing for their plot to rest on. Thus resolved to denounce himself and absolve his friend, he now determined that upon his own impetuosity of feeling, imprudence in discourse, and pride of generosity, the blame must fall heaviest: Adhemar, he thought, was guilty but of credulity, where suspicion would have been justifiable.

When Clarence arrived at this conclusion, he would dive no deeper; he refused to follow the subject where it must have terminated in censure of his friend's innate ill-opinion of all their species. The lifeless remains of that friend were now in his embrace; and what heart would not have forgotten his greatest errors?

With a heart laid waste, but a countenance more composed, our hero rose from the vault, and quitted the chapel.

His companions in mourning were to retread their melancholy way after a few hours rest, leaving him to prosecute his enquiries after his former friends of the chateau.

Clarence could not be insensible to objects that had vitally interested the friend he lamented. The fair fame of Adhemar's memory was now so interwoven with the success of Rénaudie's confederacy, that he meant to expedite his endeavours to seek and succour the Baron de Roche Blanc's family, that he might the sooner return to Blois, and take his share in an enterprize countenanced, he now found, by his own queen; and in which, most likely, all the nearest kindred of de Bourbon would peril their lives and estates. Commissioning the Marquis de Molleville with a message for the Prince de Condé, to this effect, he parted from him without other farewell than the sudden wringing of the sad chamberlain's

hand, as they exchanged glances at each other's mourning habits. Clarence then ascended to L'étoile; where he expected to gather more information than he had hitherto permitted himself to seek, or could think to find in the tenantless village. He hoped to learn where Aigline was retired to; and, if separated from the Baron, trusted he might induce her to accept an asylum for herself and those with her, under the roof of his father. With these hopes, no ideas of happiness were yet mixed: the joyousness of Clarence's nature was withered — at this moment, he believed, for ever — and all he sought for Aigline, (bereaved, in some degree as he was,) or expected in after-life for himself, was but that repose which freedom from sordid cares produces, — a repose that leaves the heart free to break, if it will, over its hoarded sorrow! Clarence had not known affliction long enough, to be

aware of the culpability of such a desire. Every new calamity teaches us a new duty!

His own home, Clarence found nearly as he had left it; and there he received all the little information to be collected concerning the family of the chateau. Madame de Roche Blanc had been dead three months. The disastrous conclusion of their law-suit had so increased the Baron's difficulties, that immediately after the funeral of Lólotte he had disappeared, and was not publicly heard of until his name was proclaimed amongst the first seditious persons in the Agenois, whom the King of Navarre suppressed. It was said that he was outlawed; but whether he had been taken since, or had escaped beyond sea, no one knew. Meanwhile, his unfortunate family, now shrunk to Aigline and her youngest sister, were cast out from the chateau by the persons appointed to occupy it. Whither they were gone no one knew;

though many bemoaned their hard destiny with tears. The servants of Mr. Willoughby added to this account, that Aigline had refused to enter L'étoile after the Baron was proscribed, lest the shelter afforded a factious person's children, might bring ruin on the property of her dearest friends; and that when she was actually ejected from her own home, it must have been without an hour's preparation, as she had neither sent nor gone to any neighbour for assistance. It was rumoured indeed, that her young brother had been dismissed from his place at court, and came to her luckily at this moment of affliction. Old Godefroi they knew had been with her just before then; but he had never reappeared since her departure, consequently had given no account of her.

Until Clarence heard this grievous relation, he believed his breast had room for no feeling distinct from the memory of his friend. Alas, measureless is our

capacity of suffering! as measureless we may hope will be our capacity of happiness in another world! — Aigline in affliction — Aigline a houseless wanderer, without protection, or the means of life — with two helpless creatures clinging to her tender youth for guidance and support! — Aigline thinking herself, perhaps, abandoned "by every stay, save innocence and heaven!" — abandoned by him that had been her companion in infancy, her lover in riper years! — this was an image to melt and disorder Clarence's whole soul. He was now sensible that on first hearing of her distresses he had conceived the wild hope of finding her secreted by his father's servants, in his own home; but that hope was frustrated. Where was he to seek her? — A ray of light seemed connected with Godefroi's absence from this his familiar haunt; and under his roof it was possible Aigline might be found. Clarence could have no hesitation in determining to set off

almost immediately for Lourdes. The uncertainty, however, of being welcomed there by the tidings he coveted, produced that alternation of hope and fear about a new and deserving object, which detached his thoughts, in despite of their sad clinging, from the grave of Adhemar. The recollection of his father too, pressed upon him in every part of his home, reminding him that he had yet much to do in life — perhaps much more to suffer — and if he yielded to the supineness of grief, much also to repent of. What effect the untimely death of Adhemar de Bourbon might have upon his interests with Queen Elizabeth, he guessed not: but it required little political sagacity to conclude that if the protestant power were wholly crushed in France by the ruin of the Bourbons, Clarence's rights would be left without intercessors sufficiently powerful to cope with the influence of the Dudleys, or to disentangle that coil of pernicious appearances which the affair of the stranger and the Queen

of Scots, had obviously wound round his conduct.

In his present frame of mind, this conclusion caused Clarence few selfish regrets; those feelings were benumbed within him, which had once made rank and riches desirable. Privacy in L'étoile, with his father and with Aigline, seemed now, as if it would be ever the boundary of his desires. But Clarence, it must be remembered, was not yet mature either in age or experience; and the heaviest calamity human heart can endure, was fated to be his first. Ere he commenced his search after Aigline, he went amongst the inhabitants of the valley, beseeching such of them as knew the Baron, if they knew his hiding place, to let him understand that Clarence Willoughby was ready to assist him to the utmost; and that L'étoile was open to receive his guiltless family. He then returned home, to settle modes of communication with his servants, in case they should

hear of the wanderers, while he was hunting after them in remote or obscure places.

De Molleville on quitting Blois, had received orders from the Prince de Condé to leave a memorial of his lord behind him at L'étoile — it was the war-horse of Adhemar. When Clarence, amongst other objects, went to take leave of the favourite animal, he stroked it long and sadly, then stooped his head upon it in silent recollection. How full was his heart the while! — Its dejected look, and drooping action, seemed to sympathize with his grief: he remained for some time lost in the feeling that notion excited; but suddenly raising himself and exclaiming, "This must not be!" turned desperately away.

As he next passed through that quarter of the grounds where stood the group of rude statuary formerly mentioned, and as he paused to think how often he had sat with Aigline and Lolótte under its

shade, his eye was caught by a paper which the winds might have blown into the cavity, where it was visible amongst a heap of drifted leaves; or had been placed there purposely: if the latter, it might contain the direction he sought. The next instant he possessed himself of the paper; it proved to be a fragment of writing, but the characters were those of Aigline; with what emotion he ran his eye over the following lines, may be imagined.

Where art thou, Clarence! sit'st thou now
Where beauties smile, and goblets flow;
Where pleasure deck'd in gaudiest wreath,
Drugs her deep cup with woe and death?
Sit'st thou the gayest of the gay,
Gilding with charm-creative ray;
All near thee, till thy cheated sight,
Heeds not its own reflected light,
But deems each thing innately bright?
Sit'st thou of that seducing whole,
At once the centre and the soul;
Statesmen and warriors listening round,
And fix'd, as on enchanted ground;

And glancing oft each female eye
On thy bright aspect's speaking dye!
O! sit'st thou thus, forgetting all
That held thy ardent will in thrall,
When Roche Blanc's grassy meads we trod,
Discoursing Nature and her God!
Forget'st thou too, the lonely heart
Which ne'er from thine had thought apart,
But glowed with all thy fancy fired,
Quenching its flame, if thine expired!
O, sit'st thou thus! — or mute and pale,
Tho' mirth's loud bursts thine ear assail!
Does sudden trance of past delight
Dim with soft shade that aspect bright;
And cast thy sparkling spirits o'er,
A mist, — a cloud, — a charm the more!
Does fancy to L'étoile's sweet grove
Waft thee again with me and love?
Where blushing, trembling, yet unswerved,
By right, and filial duty nerved,
I curb'd my heart, and chid thee oft,
Tho' brib'd by looks and pleadings soft.
For might that heart have broke its chain,
Those looks had never sued in vain;
Tears, tears of trusting, tender sadness —
Sighs, half in sorrow, half in gladness.

— — — — — —

But it is o'er: between us now
Spreads many a league, and haply thou
Forgettest all, — while I, alas! —

Here the fragment broke off, leaving Clarence's pulses beating, and his whole frame vibrating with emotions, of which only a moment before, he would have pronounced himself incapable. — Even the great tenderness these lines breathed, might have been attributed to that strong sisterly regard, which not uncommonly takes place between persons situated as Clarence and Aigline had been; but the distinct confession it contained of unequivocal attachment having been concealed in obedience to parental command, at once did this idea away; and brought with it what would have been blissful conviction, in other circumstances.

Clarence read the fragment again and again; sighing occasionally at the contrast between such a picture and its altered original, in his present state; meanwhile his heart rather than his imagination, supplying the shattered lines, whispered that there was yet one species

of happiness left for him in life, that of lamenting his friend in the arms of sympathy and affection. Even Aigline's image, could not in the present freshness of such a loss, offer him livelier consolation. More impatient, however, than he had been, to regain and claim her, he hastened on to Lourdes.

Godefroi was no longer there; the old woman in whose charge he had left his humble dwelling, said he was gone into the mountains in quest of simples, as was always his practice in spring, and that he bid her tell any one that enquired after him, he would be met with at his own home again, in a week or two. Clarence then questioned her on the subject of Ma'mselle de Venzeles. She admitted that Aigline and her sister had lived some time with the good old man, but had abruptly quitted the house the second day after his departure, in company with a gentleman who came and fetched them away. This person had

given the informant a piece of gold, but his name she knew not, and his features she never looked long enough at, to give any description of.

Clarence could only hope that this person was Baron de Roche Blanc (improbable as such an imagination appeared, under his circumstances,) and as he tried to fortify such a hope, by every sophistry which inclination to believe teaches us, he thanked heaven for the assurance he now treasured in his breast, of Aigline's indifference to all other men. Wherever Aigline was gone, he thought Godefroi must be informed: and assured that the old man at his age, could not proceed wholly beyond the reach of enquiry, he left a few lines for him in case of his previous return, and giving them with some money to the housekeeper, penetrated direct to the mountains. He had left his trusty Lancelot at L'étoile, to wait there for chance intelligence; and praying that success might attend

his own pursuit, he plunged into the chain of defiles and valleys, which commencing in the French Pyrenees, terminates on the Spanish side by the port or gate of the Tourmalet.

In these lofty regions, the sylvan acquaintances of Clarence, greeted his re-appearance with joy, and entered with ardor into his pursuit. Their hearts and habits were unchanged: invariable as the rocky world in which they lived, with the same companions and the same feelings, running their limited round from year to year! — but how altered was Clarence! not four years were gone, since they had seen him bounding among their cliffs, with spirits as elastic as the air; and now he returned, with sorrow in his heart and on his cheek!

The sympathies of uncorrupt men, are quick and strong: these artless people at once understood their young favourite's feelings, when they were told he had just buried a murdered friend; that

the companions of his childhood were proscribed people; and that until he found and succoured them, he durst not allow himself in seeking vengeance upon the destroyers of him he lamented. Herdsmen and hunters began to task their memory for some recollection of such persons as he described; and more than one of them remembered that they had seen an old man of a martial figure and singularly white locks, proceeding in the direction of the Tourmalet in company with an Arragonese, who was well known to unite the two characters of a guide and smuggler.

Clarence knew this man well, nay, had more than once rendered him imprudent, and he now thought unjustifiable service; but he might be the means of assisting them he was anxious for, — and he determined henceforth to enquire for him, as well as for Godefroi.

Clarence was now in the basin of Luz, and his way to the Tourmalet

lay under the rock of Escalette; he could not pass that fort unvisited; it was there Adhemar de Bourbon had desired to be laid, if his body was denied sepulture by the side of Lólotte. As Clarence now looked up to the tower, its hue of iron grey, and its embattled head, frowning through clouds, seemed to mark it as the fit monument of a warrior. The next moment he was climbing the precipitous, and now shattered path; regardless of danger, preserved as much by that very recklessness, as by former habit. In the overshadowed valley below, the gloom of evening was already settled into absolute darkness; but on the lofty heights of Escalette, light still lingered, though dim and dying. A few streaks of crimson in the sullen clouds which skirted the sky, gave solemn effect to the sunset, and to the deep hush of the woods; over the last, the mellow strains of a horn were heard floating at intervals; some solitary

hunter was thus calling his dogs together, or giving warning of his approach to his family. The blast was mournful as well as sweet, and to Clarence's ear, as he suspended his toiling steps to listen, it sounded like the dirge, or the voice of his departed friend;—he broke, however, from the saddening spell, and advanced to the fort.

The redness and the stillness of the heavens, boded one of those storms well known to all that are familiar with the Pyrenees. Clarence heeded not the warning: he thought only of entering that place, where his boyish heart had first pledged itself to the gallant preserver of his life; and then quitting it for the objects of other interest. One of the soldiers remembering to have seen him on that very night, admitted him without hesitation into the court of guard.

The officer who commanded in the fort was out on his rounds; vigilant observation of the Spaniards, extending his

duty to other points; but such as had authority during his absence, readily granted a brother-soldier's request. Upon being questioned, none of these men could say they had seen Godefroi lately, although some of them knew him well.

This circumstance corroborated Clarence's opinion that the old man, having purposely avoided them, was endeavouring to convey Baron de Roche Blanc privately into Spain, beyond reach of immediate seizure;—and probably his daughter might be joined to them.

This idea had encouragement in it, and Clarence resolved, therefore, in defiance of the threatening clouds, and the respectful invitation of the soldiers, not to stay in Escalette longer than was required for the sorrowful gratification he sought. Gratefully thanking those that thus indulged him, he turned into the fort, at once proceeding to the hall. He entered it alone. The vast tenement was vacant; for the garrison had turned

another place into their supper-room; here, there was neither the blazing of a fire, nor the light of a living countenance to break the gloom: piled up armour remained where it had stood above three years before: shrill blasts still entered at the worse defended casements: the same ponderous table, surrounded by benches of blackened oak, occupied the centre — but where were they that had encircled it? Where was the young warrior, whose noble mien and heroic discourse had graced and elevated the mirth of all the others?—and where was the delighted spirit, the glowing heart, the beaming face, that had then belonged to the individual who now stood in this very chamber, alone and comfortless!

Never had the quick desolation of his fate been so present to Clarence! The place he contemplated, merely stripped of its former gladdening accompaniments, would have been forlorn enough; but associated with the days of thoughtless

boyhood, and of kindly affections, of vivid hope, and eager expectation, its effect mounted to agony. His heart yielded, and he threw himself upon the ground; that heart once more rejected comfort: and for awhile, as the tender image of Aigline courted him to hope of future happiness, — nay, as the stern voice of various duties called on him to arise and enter upon their performance, he turned from their united importunities, with much of his early violence.

The storm meanwhile, which had burst forth directly after Clarence had entered the fort, fearfully increased: rain, hail, and winds from every point of the compass, beat against the unequal fastenings, as if to force entrance: doors and windows gave way in all directions; trees crashed, and waters splashed. Clarence heeded not this roar of sound; nor saw the quick and quivering flash which appeared and vanished, like a spirit preparing a path for the thunder.— The thunder

itself, rolling forward with slow and awful majesty, "e'en to the verge of Heaven," shook the ancient tower to its foundation. Its solemn sound appeared the voice of Deity itself, reproving the sinful nature that rebelled thus against the command to submission. It certainly gave pause to Clarence's passionate grief: he recollected his father's precepts and example; recollected too that his dear parent was alone and suffering, looking to him and to nothing but him, for future cheering;—that he must "gird up" his mind, if he would fulfil such expectations, or ever hope to repay him for all he had endured on his account.—Starting from the ground with instant contrition, yet not with immediate self-mastery, he rushed at once from the spot which he fancied must upbraid him, if he remained calmly in it; and declining every invitation to the contrary, persisted in braving the weather and the darkness.

As Clarence passed the half-open door of a room where some of the soldiers were at supper, he heard them carelessly discussing the Chevalier de Bourbon's age and actions, speculating upon who might be destined to his regiment, and to his place among the knights of St. Michael. Their discourse was mixed with phrases of admiration it is true, yet it caused as sharp a pang as any Clarence had hitherto felt, to enter his heart. How vain, he thought, were illustrious deeds! What a breath was human incense, when it was thus that his death was spoken of, who had been the idol of armies, and who would have called life a cheap purchase, for one day's glory! — In moments of bitter suffering, we are often as unjust to our species, as insensible to the higher motives which encourage us "not to be weary in well-doing!" Clarence erred in both ways on this occasion. These soldiers neither belonged to

the French army, nor had ever come within view of the Chevalier's martial character. They were the subjects of Anthony Bourbon, in these his foreign possessions; not military vassals from the country of his ancestors. His famed nephew, was, therefore, to them, but like the unsubstantial heroes of their legendary songs. — One only, who had fought under Adhemar in the campaign of Picardy, and often followed the rash banner of his young pupil, now challenged Clarence's recollection; enquiring with a blunt impetuosity, for which his honest concern apologized, the particulars of the hero's death. While Clarence briefly repeated these, together with his friend's last words, the soldier's roughness melted, and tears trickled over cheeks, that looked as though they were not only of the same hue, but of the same material with his rusted mail. — "Would you had buried him here," he exclaimed, wring-

ing the narrator's hand, and striding from him. Clarence could have followed and taken him to his heart: — but refusing himself new indulgencies, glanced for a moment at the battling clouds, then tore himself away.

CHAP. XI.

Much of what had occurred to Aigline during the long period of Clarence Willoughby's absence from Roche Blanc, has been sufficiently indicated; but some of the events require a more detailed account.

The death of her mother, immediately following that of Lolótte; the necessity of her step-father's flight from the place where his creditors would first seek him; the protracted absence of Mr. Willoughby; and what she believed to be the new views of Clarence, left Aigline bereft of a friend or guide, save the good and kind, but wholly-artless minister of their Hugonot village. The St. Maurs

quickly proved the hollowness of their professions; at least, the worldly indifference with which they shook hands with agreeable neighbours one moment, and smilingly saw them ruined the next. Victor St. Maur's assiduities had terminated with Lolótte's fortune: he quitted Roche Blanc for likelier speculations. On the first rumour of Baron de Roche Blanc's connection with the disaffected of the Agenois, the marquis called himself justified in prohibiting all intercourse between their families; and his youngest daughter, who would have had no scruple in disobeying her father, provided she might have found amusement or admirers at the chateau, yielded without resistance to his command, when it excused her from visiting one whose spirits were even more in mourning than her dress. Pauline alone continued to seek the unfortunate; but her good intentions were so deformed by the narrowness of her views, and her occasional references to

what was passing at court were so painful to Aigline, so withering to her latent trust in Clarence's constancy, and the consequent relentingness of her own destiny, that she rather shunned her visitations.

From Pauline, Aigline heard of Clarence's affair with Comte de Mirecourt, and of Comtesse d'Enghien's share in its harmless termination. Pauline's informant had unluckily left Blois ere the Comtesse's declaration in favour of de Longueville was made public; consequently every one believed her hand destined for the young Englishman.

The tears that washed the fading cheek of Aigline, as she dwelt in silence and in sorrow over the remembrance of this information, it would be fruitless to number. Clarence then had transferred his heart to another! — to one, doubtless, more worthy of him in every way: yet, perhaps, he had done it rather, in grateful return for the distinguishing preference of an interesting wo-

man, allied to his illustrious friends, than from voluntary susceptibility! But he had not divined Aigline's reason for refusing to listen to him; he had not observed the variance of her words and looks! — ah! then, he had not loved her sufficiently for the sentiment to have repaid him after all, for what he must have given up in marrying one so friendless as she! — Ought Aigline then to grieve that she had persisted in obeying her mother, and sacrificing herself to other duties? Mistaken as her mother owned herself in her last moments, still Aigline's unquestioning obedience at the time it was exacted, would ever afford herself a consoling subject of reflection: when, had she acted contrary to those exhortations, and secured Clarence, by acceptance, her punishment would assuredly have been the sight of his after discontent. In defiance of such reasoning, however, and the most sincere seeking of strength and succour from the

only hand that may entirely bestow them, regret now and then gnawed at her heart; but other cares began to press on her boding many a direful change, and calling her to thought and activity of a very different nature from what she had hitherto exercised.

Even his wife's death had not brought the Baron back to his family; and although the product of the land around the chateau, secured daily bread to its inhabitants, other things were required which this could not supply. — If Cecile grew worse, (and she was now obviously in a consumption) Aigline had not means to pay for advice from a distant place: — if accident or distress overtook any of their humble neighbours, Aigline could no longer answer their undoubting call: — travellers came, and she was forced to deny them hospitality: — mendicants begged — houseless Hugonots, perhaps, suffering for conscience-sake; and if she gave them her own portion of bread, and

the draught of her own cup, it was the utmost she could afford: — in short, her humblest sources of satisfaction were drying up. Ah! none can imagine the grief of such altered circumstances, except such as have experienced them! The Baron had drained the resources of the chateau. He often sent privily, on specious pretences of eventual benefit, for all the money that could be raised there; and at length dictated the sale of certain stores collected as a magazine of want; and when these were disposed of, Aigline's very means of life were exhausted. The person who came with this commission, brought most lavish assurances of immediate good fortune from her step-father, who was, in truth, going to risk it in a sort of a lottery; the boasting hopes were never realized; and Aigline, forced to rid herself of the numerous domestics, whose food and raiment drew too largely upon her shrunk means, was at last left in the chateau, with none but Cecile,

Thomasine, and the steward. She had no mode of communication with her brother now the Baron was away; and if she could have sent to him, François' youth and stipend could have done her little service. "While we have a roof to shelter us, and a root to eat," she said, one day, to the complaining Cecile, "let us not afflict him! Oh, if my only friend were here!" — she stopped, self-rebuked, for designating Mr. Willoughby as her only friend, and denying the title to Clarence, simply because he had ceased to be her lover.

The recollection of this once-professed love, and of his supposed engagement with the Comtesse d'Enghien, rendered it impossible for Aigline to seek the shelter of L'étoile. Not only pride and delicacy, but generosity revolted against such a step; and charging her few companions in suffering, to conceal their poverty as much as possible from every eye, lest it should be known there, she

went on, struggling with want, in silence.

Poor Aigline's misery had not yet reached its appointed height; — in the same hour she heard that her step-father was proclaimed, amongst other seditious, concerned in an insurrection against the French government, and received a proof of the ruin this new levity, — for all in the Baron was lightness, not passion,— had brought on them, by the appearance of her brother François.

Baron Roche Blanc had been seduced by a bad spirit amongst the reformed, to give the colour of Anthony Bourbon's support, to his own interested inflammation of popular discontent. The Baron's vanity could not resist such an opportunity of appearing *a personage*; and he had in consequence talked so openly of his son's high favor at Nerac, and his own knowledge of the secret inclinations in that cabinet, that many were deceived into the belief desired; and he himself,

upon the quelling of the insurrection, left to bear the brunt of his sovereign's resentment.

François was immediately dismissed from his office of page; and abandoned to the frenzy of such humiliation at so early an age, he returned home, to sob out his passion, in the arms of his eldest sister. Not a day was given the poor boy for such indulgence; his father's creditors, alarmed lest the state should seize upon and confiscate the property to the crown, hastened to substantiate their prior claims, by taking possession of it themselves. The unfortunate family of la Marot would then have been houseless, — for all the Hugonots of the valley, magnifying their own danger, had fled from expected persecution, — had it not been for old Godefroi. In one of his previous sojourns at L'étoile, during an occasional visit to Aigline, he had noted with surprise and concern, not merely the diminution of servants in the chateau,

but the altered style of living there, besides the more grievous alteration in its young mistress. Those eyes, which were wont to smile welcome on the old man, and that gladsome step, which ever bounded to meet the approach of one associated with thoughts of Clarence, were wholly changed. The eyes were downcast and tearful; the step slow and spiritless, as if Aigline were loth to meet one she could no longer offer bounteous hospitality to. Godefroi made his own observations; returned home; carefully hoarded up his pension, and the slender addition made to it by his straw-works, and the sale of scarce simples at a neighbouring monastery, and when this reached the sum he deemed fitting, walked with it to Roche Blanc.

On the day it was presented, Aigline had gratefully, weepingly declined this touching offering; promising to gratify the old man by claiming it of him, if ever she stood actually in such need:—

but when immediately after this, she saw herself all at once bereft of a home; abandoned, by her step-father's imprudence or criminality, to absolute starvation; — and with two living beings, both younger, and one more helpless than herself, dependant upon her for support, — she accepted, with convulsive grief, gratitude, and bitter thought of past and future, the shelter he then pressed on her.

Some plans settled, and their hasty preparations made, she shut herself for a few moments into the chamber that had been her's and Lolótte's: there, she cast herself upon her knees; not to ask a different destiny from the God, who evidently saw fit to task her young spirit to the utmost, but to implore his aid to bear her trials with patience and discretion. Her whole heart then assented to the merciful dispensation which had previously removed her beloved sister. Under present circumstances, Lolótte's

beauty, and peculiar misfortune, would have heavily increased the burden of her anxieties; since then, it was only Aigline that sorrowed and endured (for Lolótte's guileless spirit, she believed, was now enjoying the fulness of intelligence and bliss, in the bosom of their God,) ought she not to rejoice, rather than to deplore her early death?

The torrent-tears Aigline yielded to in this desolate chamber, were the last she allowed herself to shed: — "If ever our fate relaxes," she murmured, "then I may weep again — from thankfulness!" she rose from her knees as she spoke, and with severe self-command, refusing herself another look at walls teeming with tender recollections, she went forth, with a settled countenance, to rejoin her companions in desolation.

Their short journey was to be performed in a very different mode than had been usual in the family of Baron de Roche Blanc: it was more strikingly degrading

to François, whose boyish pride, nursed in a palace, and yet untamed by adversity, revolted against the mean vintage-waggon which was to bear them all to Lourdes. He threw himself on the pavement of his father's court in a perfect phrensy of desperate feelings; vowing that he would stay there and die, rather than thus quit his home like a vagrant and a malefactor. Aigline trembled and grieved when she saw this immoderate sensibility to what François deemed disgrace: she was aware how much of good or evil might be wrought out of it, in after life, by events and associates. At present, her task was to soothe it; and difficult was the task. None that have not felt in childhood, the agony of a premature sensibility, prematurely called forth by cruel circumstances; or have not witnessed the actual proofs of such sensibility, can conceive what such agony is: nor how vain is the hope of allaying it, either by argument or au-

thority. Our tears may be checked, our cries silenced, but the heart within, only welters with more impetuous destructiveness! François was endeared to Aigline from his lively sorrow at the sufferings and death of Lolótte, and from many loveable qualities of his own; she was therefore led to do for him, what she would have shrunk from on her own account: and as in return for her tender persuasiveness, he kept repeating, that he would walk on foot to Paris, and tell his story to the Chevalier de Bourbon, who had placed him at Nerac, it struck her, that she ought rather to claim for him the protection of the Chevalier, than thus try his young heart beyond its probable bearing, by obliging him to temporary dependance upon a pensioned old man.

Her half-uttered expression of this sentiment, emboldened their only remaining domestic to offer his services in accompanying — he would not affront a royal page so grossly, as to say, — pro-

tecting him to the court. François seized at the idea, and vehemently pressed it. Doing so, with many arguments which honoured his feelings as a brother, and further testified that the proud sense of ignominy which now stung him to madness, when purified from its dross would prove sterling ore. Godefroi would have appeased his present mortification, by respectfully observing that no reverse of circumstances is disgraceful, except when it is produced by our own weakness or wickedness.

"Right, old man!" exclaimed François, acutely, in a more lordly tone than he would have used had he been differently situated — "and don't you think that a man inherits disgrace, as well as honor? But, if I live, please God! I'll redeem our family good name, though with every drop of blood in my veins!"

The boy kept his word. When the royal child whom he had just left in its cradle, fought for his own rights and

those of his country, and at last ascended the throne of France, as well as Navarre, François Baron de Roche Blanc distinguished himself by honor without stain; fidelity which no misfortunes could shake; and bravery, before which only that of the renowned *Bras de Fer*, might then take precedence!

When Aigline, who had involuntarily caught her brother in her arms, released him from them, she called a sort of council of those about her; in which it was determined that François should indeed go, attended by Gregoire, to the Prince de Condé's stationary residence at Meaux, and there seek a certain direction to the Vicomte de Limoges. To sue for favour to his inconsiderate father, and protection for his unoffending youth, to that Adhemar de Bourbon who had avowed unalterable interest in all that claimed kindred with Lolótte, could neither wound pride, nor shock delicacy; and while Aigline charged him to conceal

the desperate situation of herself and Cecile from the knowledge of Clarence Willoughby, she controlled the natural infirmity of love, — something like resentment at the quick transfer of a heart once sworn to unchangeableness, — and recommended her brother to the friend of her childhood for kind watchfulness over his faults, in terms suitable to their professed friendship. The little ornaments of her gala days were then given privately to Gregoire, that her brother might not be all at once dependant upon those he went to, or unprovided, in case of unlucky detention on his journey. One or two of these trifles were associated with remembrances that would have made Aigline unwilling to part with them under happier circumstances: but now, that a wide and wasting sea had spread over so many objects of vital importance, were the weeds and shells of the shore to be regretted! She smothered the sigh that would have accompanied their trans-

fer: keeping longest in her hand a bracelet which Clarence had clasped round her wrist a hundred times! Then shaking off the forbidden tears which started to her eyes, as she saw Godefroi forcing upon François the loan, as he termed it, of some gold, to procure conveyance on his long journey, she returned the poor boy's grateful, agitated, half-miserable, half-joyous embrace, with a benediction scarcely distinguishable from the sighs that came thronging along with it; and leaving him to begin his journey, by a different route than the one which would have inflicted on him the grief of seeing his sisters travelling, like common peasants, she passed at once through the outer court of their home to her rude vehicle.

On the road, and in the humble dwelling of Godefroi, where a stupid relative of his was their sole attendant, Aigline had grief of another kind to contend with, in her sister's fractious complaints,

and insolent disregard of the kind old man who now stood in the place of parent and friend to them. It is the common failing of sensible hearts, to fancy themselves responsible for the conduct of those belonging to them. Even Cecile's early years, and increasing malady, could not lesson the enormity of her ungrateful selfishness; and poor Aigline, as she often felt the shaft in her own breast, was the more pained to see it aimed at that of their benevolent host. If luxury and pomp were wanting, neatness and kindness presided at the necessarily limited board of the old soldier: his pleasant garden, the pride and delight of his own heart, was dressed by his hand and Nature's, with every variety of beautiful flowers: the most unvarying respect made him devote one small apartment to his young inmates, which his associates never entered; and he braved without murmur, the hazard of losing his pension, in consequence of so har-

bouring the family of a proscribed person. All this Cecile knew, and in her saner moments (for passionate selfishness is a species of insanity) she would mutter something of acknowledgement. But she had no amusement left, except mocking the people about her; and she hated the horrid black defile in which Lourdes was romantically shut up — and she got no new cloaths — and she abhorred the mumbling old woman that waited on them; therefore railed at Thomasine for not being at hand to bear her humors, and coax her really-sick appetite. Thomasine had previously gone to Barêges, to collect some little property left her there by a relation; and Aigline well knew that the excellent creature went in the hope of being permitted to return and devote it to the sister of her dear young lady. But Cecile would not believe in such a motive, continuing to brand her with every injurious title. The rebellion of Cecile's

heart was, indeed, unsoftened by one kindly quality, such as redeemed that of François. She had no paroxysms of impatient agony for others; she bewailed only her own portion in the wide ruin of her family. Aigline could not forbear sighing sometimes when she thought, that to be this little tyrant's slave through life, she had refused happiness and Clarence Willoughby! What was to be their future lot together she had not courage to enquire: the task of re-educating the spoilt girl's mind, however desirable for her own good and that of others, could not be attempted yet. All that Aigline could do at present, was to keep her bitter moods out of sight of their benevolent entertainer, and minister herself to the wants of her suffering frame. How often, while doing this, terrified at the prospect before her, and loth to drain the resources of one whose age might soon require every thing itself, did she envy Lolótte her blessed rest!

How often recall the words of Josephine at St. Genevieve's, when she said, a time might come in which Aigline would wish for such a shelter as that of their holy house! Aigline had now no strong hope but in Josephine's noble nephew; and upon that she contrived to support her spirits, harassed as they were by hourly fears of hearing that her step-father was taken.

Six dreary weeks passed without tidings, either of the Baron or of François. The latter, of course, might have completed his long journey; and some one, *very ardent in the desire,* might have reached her at least from Blois, where she heard the French court were; the time seemed so long to Aigline, that an involuntary idea of being wilfully abandoned, insinuated itself through her mind. "O how superior is friendship to love!" she one day exclaimed — "the one lasts — the other wears away! Had Clarence been my friend, he would have flown to

offer me succour; but this fiercer flame, once burnt out, leaves nothing except coldness and darkness behind it. God only will befriend me — I need look to no help from man!" Convulsive sobs burst from her as she spoke — for the fate she had imagined was, indeed, wretched: — but instant conviction of her own injustice followed; and, with penitent humility, she then acknowledged, that in the humble Godefroi she had found a real stay; and that as Clarence had never yet given her cause to accuse him of ceasing to regard tenderly, what he had been forbidden to love passionately, she might continue to expect from his hands such kind assistance as his father would have rendered.

Godefroi was a Catholic; and that circumstance rendered him less liable to be suspected of favouring Hugonots: yet Aigline was in perpetual apprehension of some evil happening to him on her account, in consequence of the vigour with

which the inferior agents of Anthony Bourbon, executed edicts which the sovereign in his own heart regretted. She frequently revolved what steps she could take and whither go, to relieve Godefroi from this danger, and from pecuniary burthens. Had she been Catholic, with what joy would she have shut herself in a cloister with the sister that was apparently fastened on her for life! — Had she been near enough to St. Genevieve's, perhaps Aigline could not have resisted the temptation of asking temporary shelter there. Josephine's influence might have obtained it; and the aunt of Adhemar de Bourbon have exerted herself to procure, through him, a mitigation of the king of Navarre's wrath against Baron de Roche Blanc. — If the Baron could reappear with safety, some arrangement might be made with his creditors, which might at least find them all a home again. Godefroi had ascertained, by consulting a lawyer at Pau, that the children of an out-

lawed person were incapable of obtaining legal redress; therefore, certain unjust seizures by different creditors remained unredeemable.

Aigline and he were talking over this dispiriting disappointment of one faint hope, when Baron de Roche Blanc suddenly presented himself. He was disguised it is true, and it was night. His appearance rather excited consternation than joy; and precautions were immediately taken, that not even Godefroi's female attendant should get sight of him. By some means he had discovered where his daughters were; and venturing forth from his latest lurking place, came to request Godefroi would assist him in getting off through the mountains, to a Spanish port. Aigline was at first shocked by the alteration in her step-father's appearance; receiving it as a proof of a harrassed spirit: but on calmer observation, she found that his haggard and forlorn look was entirely owing to the

growth of his beard, the soil of his skin and cloathes, and that air of unceremonious hastiness, which his situation in some measure justified. His self-complacency and levity were unalterable: he talked of himself, as of a hero of romance; described his adventures, and his *great sacrifices in the most glorious cause,* with a parade of feeling, and a false assumption of public virtue, which might have made the conscientious martyr for religion and liberty, ashamed to use their perverted names.

After telling Aigline that he meant to go direct for the Island of Jersey, and wait there the reversal of his unjust sentence, which he confidently expected now, since Aigline told him François was luckily gone to the Chevalier de Bourbon, he abruptly asked Godefroi to be his guide through the by-paths of the Pyrenees. The moment was critical, and no time was to be lost, if Godefroi meant to serve the two innocent daugh-

ters of this heartless person, from more grievous loss and disgrace: he would not permit Aigline to check him; but at once undertook the office; then arranged their plan of action, — concealed the Baron for the night in a wood-house, and by day-break the next morning, joining him at a given spot, proceeded with him under pretext of simple-gathering, in the direction of Spain.

Aigline was left almost stupified by the rapidity and importance of the whole affair: she was conscious that she would soon feel more anxiety for the good old soldier, than for the indiscreet Baron himself, who thus scrupled not to risk the benefactor of his houseless children for his own especial safety. His unguarded exclamation at the cough and burning colour of Cecile, had revived her worst apprehensions for this ungracious sister, who suddenly alarmed herself, was complaining and reproaching Aigline for the want of that medical aid which the latter knew not where to seek, nor how to repay, if ob-

tained. The Baron had told his children that he meant to send for them both to Jersey, nay, most likely to England, if things turned out as he expected. What those expectations were, Aigline feared to guess: if they were, to throw himself and his family upon the precarious fortune of Mr. Willoughby — of that honoured friend whose hand and heart had been so often exhausted by such calls in times gone by, — she felt that such humiliation, situated as she now was with Clarence, would be the last of her griefs.

Aigline thought the heart always breaks, when the evil it most dreads falls upon it! She was ruminating on these subjects, the second day after Godefroi's departure, while Cecile slept in an adjoining room, when the sound of a remembered voice, enquiring for her in the porch, caused her to start from her seat. The tones of any familiar voice, were unavoidably so identified with remembrance of Roche Blanc, that not one, but several persons were in an instant present to her imagina-

tion. She made one eager spring forward; then more quickly retreated, uncertain who she was to meet; for she would not allow herself to feel, that she expected either Clarence or his father. The enquirer entered: Aigline scarcely breathed, and a mist passed before her eyes;—that cleared away, and she saw the Abbé de Fontevraud.

How rapid are the combinations of thought! During that instant glance, Aigline felt and fancied all that this unexpected appearance might be destined to produce. If Fontevraud were really faithful to his supposed attachment, if he came to offer her his hand, and a consequent home for the dying Cecile—if all other friends failed, and Clarence Willoughby were indeed given to another, what would her enforced promises for Cecile, bind her to? what be the duty of gratitude to her present venerable benefactor? what the promptings of affectionate hope for her brother? Fontevraud's

sparkling eyes and mourning habit, at once told of unabated feelings, and said why had they not been earlier acted on.

Pale, aghast, trembling, — feeling that she would willingly die rather than give herself to any man now Clarence was lost to her, yet aware of woman's over-ruled fate, she sunk back upon her seat, with an action so repulsive, that it arrested Fontevraud's approach; — he stopt amazed: then after a short silence, said abruptly, "I see you have been set against me, Aigline."

"Forgive me, monsieur!" she faltered out, rising with an air of modest distance, and casting down her eyes — "our changed circumstances must plead — the loss of my mother — of other dear" — She could not proceed; her heart gave way at once before the rush of these various and sorrowful remembrances, which the sight of the abbé revived, and throwing herself back on her chair, she covered her face and wept

audibly. It was the first time she had wept since she quitted Roche Blanc.

"Be comforted, my dearest Aigline!" exclaimed the abbé, with the most undisguised expression of affection in his voice and countenance, as he hastened to support her, by an action from which Aigline shrunk to shuddering. She had pushed away the arm that would have encircled her, with such force, that it amounted to rudeness, and she expected, therefore, to see either shame or vexation on the brow of Fontevraud; but, smiling with peculiar urbanity, his piercing eye melting as it fixed on her changed person, he first exclaimed, "My poor Aigline!" — then taking her reluctant hand, calmly seated himself by her side.

"I perceive your mistake, Aigline, and the unfair dealing of those about you. You fancy me your lover — (he smiled again, till Aigline felt confused and humbled;) and I am but your na-

tural protector — your nearest relation — the brother of your father!"

"My uncle!" repeated Aigline, with a joyful cry, "O! have I such a dear relation, when I thought myself without"— she snatched his hand to her lips, and finished the sentence there. Instinctive delicacy prevented warmer acknowledgement of their relationship: former impressions could not be effaced in a moment; and blushing even after this modest display of joy, she enquired with an embarrassed look, why she had not known this sooner? why he alone, of all her father's kindred, thus sought his orphan?

Fontevraud's explanation was full and satisfactory. The principal facts were these: Aigline's father and himself, between whose ages there was a distance of twelve years, were the only remaining offspring by a first marriage of the Marquis de Venzéles, who marrying a second time, had a second family. Fon-

tevraud lost his brother, when the former was only thirteen; but retaining a strong sense of peculiar kindness from this brother, when as a sickly child, the younger was the object of their step-mother's aversion, he cherished his memory with a tenacity, which might not have been the case, under different circumstances. His age at the time, and his subsequent college life, kept him from knowing more about his brother's widow, than that she had refused with vindictiveness to yield up her child for a Catholic education, and that she had re-married. He was afterwards led to understand that her child died. Fontevraud's extreme bodily suffering in early youth, made him so averse to scenes of activity and parade, that he was easily induced to enter the church; and possessing a small estate of his own, the name of which he bore, he proceeded to Italy, avowedly in pursuit of health; but in fact, to gratify his passion for literature and the arts. During

his long sojourn there, the children of his step-mother, to whom the family honours were transferred by his dedication to the priesthood, successively died, and he was authoritatively recalled, to resume secular rank and duties. It was at this period, that accident having thrown him in the way of Baron de Roche Blanc, whose title struck him, and whose garrulous vanity informed him of all he wanted to know, he seized that opportunity of judging for himself of the Baroness, and seeing Aigline. The name of Fontevraud happily concealed him without pre-meditated disguise: he thus saw the whole family in their true characters; and having ascertained first from the pastor's wife, and then from the Baroness's own assertions, that Aigline was portionless, he prosecuted other inquiries afterwards, which confirmed his suspicion that her lawful property had not indeed been sold, but leased out for a term of years, exceeding that of an ordinary life,

and the money so produced, devoted to gratify her mother's passionate wish of appearing to have made a most splendid marriage: a wish solely excited by the desire of mortifying her first husband's relations. Delighted with his niece, indignant at her mother, and animated by tender recollection of his brother, Fontevraud left Roche Blanc in the hope of obtaining his father's permission to claim, or see her righted. Afraid of alarming the Baron and Baroness into absolute removal, he quitted Bearn without acquainting them with his real quality. Deciding upon the existence of a mutual attachment between his niece and Clarence Willoughby, he would have gone purposely to Paris to make personal observation upon the young man, had not some news he met on the road, carried him at once to Normandy.

The Marquis de Venzéles was dangerously ill. He recovered, however; but his constitution was so shattered, his tem-

per become so irascible, and his wife still so determined to keep out new claimants upon his hoarded wealth, that not one of Fontevraud's representations in Aigline's favour, were attended to. Finding his father's resentment against the mother, extended to the child, he submitted now, promising himself ample and generous satisfaction at a future day. Fontevraud, however, was not of a disposition to sit down tamely under foreign injustice, and he wrote to Madame de Roche Blanc; threatening her and the Baron with exposure by a suit at law, whenever he should stand in his father's place. He reproached her with too much bitterness perhaps, (if good policy had been considered) for her mode of treating the child of his brother; admonishing her to act differently, otherwise he would brave his father's displeasure, return to Roche Blanc, and proclaim her shameful evasion of the intention of a will, if he could not convict her by its letter. In the same envelope,

he enclosed a few lines for Aigline, simply stating their relationship in suitable terms of affection; and expressing a hope that he might one day be permitted by herself, to adopt her as his own child; distinctly adding, that in such a case her peculiar sentiments on the subject of religion, should never be disturbed.

This letter, in spite of its forbearance, Madame de Roche Blanc committed to the flames; thinking the only secure way of keeping her own foul secret, was not to allow Aigline any chance of being softened towards the idea of her kindred. Madame de Roche Blanc was, however, sufficiently awakened to a sense of her culpability, that she lost not a moment in making some reparation to Aigline; and preparing a sort of excuse for herself, in the equivalent of the Baron's deed, formerly mentioned, with which she hoped to confound Fontevraud, if ever he appeared personally as their accuser.

At the moment Aigline heard of this

letter, and saw what Fontevraud thought of its suppressal, recollection of the promises extorted from her at the time it arrived, drove all the colour from her cheeks — unobservant of this, her uncle went on to say, that he had accompanied his father to the waters of Barêge, where the latter died almost immediately after reaching them. There a rumour of the Baron de Roche Blanc's ruin had penetrated; and Fontevraud, or de Venzéles, as he must now be called, waiting only to see his father suitably interred, and his step-mother on her eager way home to secure all the personal property she might plausibly pretend to, hastened to seek his niece at Roche Blanc.

New officers of the law had taken place of those that first occupied the chateau, so that the enquirer must have quitted it in despair, had not a luckier chance than befel Clarence, thrown in his way a person who had passed Aigline on her road with Godefroi to Lourdes. His directions

de Venzéles followed, and they conducted him happily.

Taking it for granted, that he was henceforth to stand in the stead of a father to Aigline, the new Marquis de Venzéles entered at once into their future movements together; what was his surprize to behold Aigline distressed and hesitating; and finally to hear her confess, that she had promised never to separate her fortunes from those of her remaining sister! His sifting questions, drew the whole truth from her: what indignation it kindled in him! — He always saw things exactly as they were, and spoke of them as they were: and he now deliberately exposed the unfairness with which she had been treated, the false claims that had been made upon her gratitude from infancy, and the disingenuousness of withholding from her the proof he had furnished, that all her father's family were not intolerant or unnatural. In an agony of uncertainty,

Aigline pleaded the awfulness, the sacredness of a promise, given to a dying parent: Foutevraud answered her objection with the point and irony of a man keenly susceptible of just resentment; asserting, that previous deceit cancelled her mother's right to such preposterous fidelity. He then asked her, what she thought her mother had most at heart, in her last moments?

Aigline conceded, it was the future provision of Cecile.

Well then! how was that to be secured by a young creature like herself, thrust out from her home, left to perish by her step-father, and unable to substantiate her claim to the smallest remnant of property?

Aigline shuddered to see her mother's faults further unveiled, therefore was loath to admit their extent to a degree that might absolve her from the cruel promise; she fancied, she was now more distinctly called upon, "to overcome evil

by good;" and how grievous that evil was, her own desolated hopes bore witness! — it had immolated her completely, and deceived her into the sacrifice: for had she not thought herself bound to Baron de Roche Blanc, for the support she was told her father's kindred had refused, would she so readily have consented to live alone for his children?

The tenderness of Aigline's conscience, joined to her inexperience, rendered her long doubtful: her uncle's arguments convinced her understanding, long ere they reached her heart. At last reason vanquished her, — she was, however, resolute on one point, not to separate from Cecile; to whom, she declared, compassion and sisterhood, would bind her, even were this enforced tie broken.

De Venzéles was little inclined to ingraft any child of the Baron de Roche Blanc's upon his family; but Aigline was firm where the right path was evi-

dent; and her uncle stating it as a grace to herself, finally consented.

De Venzéles' nature was slightly marked with hardness, refined as were his tastes, and of consequence his manner; but he distasted violently, only what merited moral displeasure; and if Aigline sighed that she did not find in him the pliable charity of Mr. Willoughby, or the prompt forgivingness of Clarence, she could not doubt that singular rectitude distinguished his character. With spirits too much exhausted, for an immediate spring up to joy, she listened to his proposal of instant removal to Normandy. The love she bore her brother François, made her anxious to stay and do her utmost for the recovery of his rights in Bearn; and if her uncle would assist her in that, she might hope, she said, to succeed; and thus obey her mother, by procuring the good of those committed to her charge. What had been already done by sending François to claim the good offices of the

Chevalier de Bourbon with his royal uncle, Aigline now recited, venturing to add, that if the chateau could be freed from occupation, through some arrangement with the creditors by payment by instalments, — (thus did urgent honesty instruct one hitherto unskilled in the traffic of life) — it might be preserved from infamy and spoliation, either against her step-father's return, or François' inheritance.

This suggestion her uncle professed himself ready to adopt; nay, to go further, and advance as a loan, for François' advantage, a certain sum out of the fortune he meant to bestow upon her. He saw the propriety of not quitting the Pyrenees, indeed, until some tidings had been received from the Chevalier de Bourbon; and he proposed, therefore, to convey her and Cecile at once to Barêges, where a temporary residence awaited them, and the ablest

medical advice, in a physician, whose friendship for the younger de Venzéles, rather than the rich rewards promised by the elder one, had induced to quit Normandy for the south of France. This gentleman and his wife — the real partner of his existence — was yet in the chateau originally engaged by the late Marquis de Venzéles; and with them his successor proposed leaving Aigline, assured of her being then with persons suited to her taste and feelings, and who were, of all others, best fitted to guide and rule the sick and impatient Cecile:— there, also, Lolótte's faithful Thomasine might join them, if she still wished not to separate from Aigline; while de Venzéles himself returned to chateau Roche Blanc, and there negociating with its present occupants, might await intelligence from Blois.

The mention of friends at Blois, naturally included the name of that dearest

friend, whom de Venzéles had heard his niece so often speak of, during his first visit to Bearn. Aigline, as if divining what his enquiries tended to, hastened to mix, in her ill-arranged reply, the information of Clarence's supposed engagement with Comtesse d'Enghien. Her uncle understood the alternate crimsoning and paleness of her cheek, while she told him this; but justly thinking the present not a moment for penetrating the recesses of a heart yet but new to confidence in himself, he forbore noticing her distress, merely setting her right, and following up his information by some gratifying eulogiums passed upon her early associate's general character and particular conduct, by a friend of the Duke de Longueville's, with whom de Venzéles was acquainted. The revolution in Aigline's heart, in Aigline's countenance at this unexpected intelligence, may be imagined. For her the

rock was struck in the desert; bright tides of hope and joy were gushing forth, where before all was parched and barren, and had not her uncle been present, she must have fallen upon her knees, clothing her rapturous gratitude in words.

Time was now precious; — and afraid of directing pursuit towards the proscribed Baron, by letting it be known whither his daughters went, de Venzéles trusted to his own return to Roche Blanc, and that of Godefroi to Lourdes, for the reception of any friend that might arrive from Blois.

Cecile, enraptured even to gaiety and good-humour by the prospect of luxury and attendance again, which this apparition of a rich relation promised her now for life, kissed her sister twenty times, called her by every endearing name, and multiplying as many odious ones upon the hospitable dwelling of their humbler benefactor, prepared for her departure

from it, with a hardness of joy, — if such a phrase be permitted, — with which Aigline's tender nature had no sympathy. She loved every herb in the garden of this lowly dwelling, and venerated even its rudest articles of furniture; sanctified as they all were by gratitude to their owner; and never was more ardent prayer put up by one human being for blessings upon another, than was done by Aigline for Godefroi, when she quitted his roof. The old man was to halt with Thomasine at Barêges for a day's rest; and with her, therefore, she hoped soon to see him, and be revived by the assurance that her step-father was beyond pursuit. The distance from Lourdes to Barêges is an easy one, though the way is toilsome, and lengthened to absolute delusion by the great variety of the road; where the beautiful, the picturesque, the romantic, and lastly the terribly sublime, succeed each other with rapidity. De Venzéles' temporary residence was

not in the town itself; it lay rather towards the entrance of the stony valley in which Barèges is situated, nearer the now-ruined castle of Sante Marie.

Aigline's grateful looks replied brightly to the welcoming of her uncle's friends, Monsieur and Madame St. André. There was as much sensibility as cheering in the fine eyes of madame; and in her husband's countenance, which at first struck Aigline, as rather marked by soldier-like roughness and hilarity, than by the pale look of study, inseparable from an idea of scientific pursuits — she had not looked twice, ere she discerned the most engaging expression of philanthropy and goodness, mixed with its bland good humour and occasional deep thoughtfulness. St. André's kindness to herself, was not diminished by now and then catching her anxious eye, as he scrutinized the complexion and make of Cecile, or hearkened to the hollow cough that interrupted her sallies of sprightly

satire. He jested and laughed with the unconscious little girl, but his kindly heart ached the while; and Aigline intercepted a glance between him and his wife, which at once told her that her sister's doom was sealed. To say that grief seized upon Aigline's heart at this discovery, would be false; but a soberer and somewhat sad feeling certainly did, and for the remainder of the evening she was silent and meditative. Not the least awful and affecting of her thoughts, was the striking fact that her mother's darling child should eventually owe shelter and succour, and perhaps restoration, to the very person she had considered with aversion, and warned her children to avoid.

Both Monsieur and Madame St. André were too well bred and judicious to attempt rousing their young charge out of a seriousness, the cause of which was so obvious and so commendable; and de Venzéles, more anxious even than

they to reanimate, without hurrying, the over-wearied spirits of his niece, willingly followed their example, and leaving Aigline to listen, fell into conversation upon subjects of taste and ancient history, calculated to please, without agitating.

As Aigline involuntarily found herself snatched out of her own thoughts, as by divine force, and hurried amongst objects of the noblest and liveliest interest; as she saw Cecile amused, and involuntarily coaxed by the amiable Madame St. André, she reproached herself for not being more vividly happy; and yet, how could she be quite happy, while uncertain of her brother's and lover's safety!

The Marquis de Venzéles was to retread his way to Roche Blanc early the ensuing morning; and though Aigline, tenderly solicitous for the health she remembered delicate, would have had him delay his return, lest such unusual activity should draw too largely upon his strength, he sported gracefully with his

own fantastic temperament, as he chose to call it, and receiving St. André's sanction, assured her, the stimulus of a strong motive, was always sufficient to recreate him for an emergency.

The next morning, when Aigline descended with Cecile into the breakfast room of the chateau, she found her uncle gone; but Monsieur and Madame St. André waited to receive her with looks as benign as their feelings. The table at which they sat, was fragrant with coffee and early fruits; and baskets of flowers, placed in each open window, formed a cheerful contrast with the long dark tresses of the ivy, which covered the chateau, and blew into the apartment. She had previously seen Thomasine, who joyfully obeyed a summons to see her dear young lady again, and hear the miraculous story of her new and bountiful relation. She was refreshed by a sweet sleep, in which every beloved inhabitant of earth or heaven, had visited her dreams. Her

heart expanded to the kindness that now greeted her in the shapes of Monsieur and Madame St. André; and all its former flashing beauty once more brightened over her countenance from her inmost feelings. Soon was the sunshine overcast! A visitant from Bayonne brought accounts of a rumour prevalent there, purporting that one of the Bourbon princes was assassinated by one of Lorraine: that the murderer had fallen a victim to the fury of the Hugonot populace; and that all the Orleanois was in a flame.

This fearful news Aigline at once received as the reason why she had not heard tidings from the Chevalier or Clarence; the most sinister forebodings seized her for the latter, and the most afflicting apprehensions for her brother. She could scarcely doubt that it was the Prince de Condé who had fallen; and if so, every officer of his household, or every one personally attached to him, must be exposed to

imminent danger. Yet, perhaps, the news might be false, or exaggerated! — Where was she to learn the truth? — How was she to seek it? — How remain in her present racking state of alarm for so many objects? Never had Aigline felt the thraldom of her sex before this: since it was impossible for her, a woman, to go in search of those for whom she was on the rack, through insurrection and bloodshed!

St. André's observing eyes read distraction in her's; and as he led her to dwell on the alarm she felt for her brother, he divined some tenderer interest concealed; and affecting only to enquire about François, went out amongst the strangers of Barêge, in hopes to collect certain information, with which to allay the torture of a perturbed spirit. Still, however, none but doubtful rumours were afloat; and even the benevolent St. André had no means of acquiring surer knowledge. The appearance of

Godefroi at last, of that good old man, for whom Aigline had just before been so anxious, gave her but short-lived though exceeding joy. After she had repeatedly kissed his hand, and gently stroked the dust from his grey silky locks,—after she had learned that Baron de Roche Blanc was in the hands of a person resolute to convey him securely to Fonterabia, and who had promised to come to Barêges with the information, her heart returned to its restless imaginings.

Godefroi partook too sincerely in her fears, from the moment she imparted their cause, to have much to say against their reasonableness: he mourned inwardly the fall of one of that noble house, under whose protection his youth had been spent; but he ventured to counsel his young fellow-sufferer to hope, even under the direst circumstances: reminding her of the happy revolution in her destiny, which had taken place since he quitted her. He guessed also,

that the early friend of Clarence, would not deem it one of her least calls to thankfulness, that her step-father's escape should be perfected by one who dared the risk of being detected in such an act, for Clarence's sake alone. It was with that name, dear to every bold mountaineer, that Godefroi had challenged and obtained the assistance of Leyrada, a noted guide and smuggler of the Spanish Pyrenees. As the old man named this lawless person, whom Clarence had admired in his boyish days as he did the mountains themselves, with a mixture of shuddering at their depths as well as heights — the palpitations of Aigline's heart were not unmingled with delight. It was sweet to remember the period in which Clarence used to talk to her of this wild Arragonese; sweeter to think that still happiness of every sort came to her through Clarence's agency! — but the throb, the glow of transport, van-

ished when she thought where Clarence might be now — perhaps lifeless, in some field of slaughter. With so many causes for thankfulness on other important subjects, Aigline was ashamed to let any one see the struggles it cost her, to tear her thoughts from this most painful one; she therefore strove to check the expression of her apprehensions even to Godefroi, after having previously requested him to bring her the first certain intelligence that arrived from Blois.

Except the kind and intellectual companions with whom the Marquis de Venzéles had left her, Aigline saw no one: the rocky pass in which Barêge itself stands, offered few temptations for her to wander beyond the immediate precincts of the chateau; yet even so, her enquiring mind and ardent heart could have opened to knowledge and happiness of no moderate degree, had it not been for anxiety about the absent; and for

commiseration of the dying girl, whose impatience under bodily suffering augmented with its increase.

Monsieur St. André was not long of penetrating the character of the sisters; and though he could not suppose the loss of such an one as Cecile, could heavily afflict a heart with which she had not one generous sympathy, he took care to deal softly with spirits cruelly worn by recent calamities; infusing by degrees only, the certainty of Cecile's malady having gone beyond the power of medicine.

Aigline wept much when she first became thoroughly convinced of this melancholy truth: now, indeed, she wept purely from pity. The same pity made her redouble those gentle admonitions and serious discourses to Cecile, which the loss of all religious instruction from persons qualified and authorised to awaken Protestant youth, had for some time made one of her essential duties.

Removed from every familiar object

into a scene of sterile and savage grandeur, Aigline's senses were not wooed into serenity, either by such pastoral loveliness as surrounded her at Roche Blanc, or such romantic beauty as marked the heights of L'étoile. She heard little else here, except the incessant din of torrents rushing in all directions among the flinty rocks; rather sweeping away, than refreshing the scanty vegetation which tries to clothe them. Such sounds were little likely to substitute pleasing for painful images; and had it not been for the watchful benevolence of Monsieur and Madame St. André, who took care to note what interested or enlivened her most, and who therefore lead conversation or selected books accordingly, her spirits could not have supported the gnawing anxiousness with which she awaited authentic intelligence of her brother and Clarence.

She had been above a week in her new abode, when Godefroi, who had gone to

Barêge, returned with certain intelligence that it was Adhemar de Bourbon who had fallen; that the Comte de Mirecourt had been accused of the murder by an officer of the Prince de Condé's (who was resolute for retribution); but had actually perished in the manner at first reported.

What was Aigline's anguish when she heard this dismal tale! — she could not doubt that Clarence was the accuser of Mirecourt, consequently had witnessed the barbarous murder of his friend. For some time even apprehension for him was swallowed up in grief and horror at the death of the Chevalier. Alas, how soon had he followed her to the grave, whose last moments his tenderness had soothed into absolute blessedness! — that sorrowful scene was now renewed by weeping memory; and as Aigline lived it over again in thought, her very heart seemed bursting. But since Lolótte had escaped this greatest affliction, ought

her sister to mourn afresh over her early death? Aigline forgot, that poor Lolótte would only have comprehended such a loss by its effects! By a powerful effort Aigline tore herself from such useless and criminal regrets: but not to find happier subjects of contemplation. The name of de Mirecourt was unavoidably associated with the remembrance of his brutal insult to Clarence; and if to former enmity had since been added the infamy arising from Clarence's just testimony against him on the present occasion, what horrors might follow? Every sort of evil consequent upon Mirecourt's death, and the animosity of his powerful kindred, then entered into her mind: the anguish of such alarm became too great for resistance; and forgetting the overpowering interest in Clarence which her impatient anxiety testified, she besought Godefroi to leave Barêge, and hasten back to Lourdes. Unless he were there to receive the earliest intelligence

from François or their friend, she might lose it altogether. Clarence, escaping by miracle from the vengeance of the Guises, might in fact hasten to Lourdes, where he would now think himself sure of finding her; or François himself might return thither. At all events, Aigline was now in a state of security, and in the friendliest hands; Thomasine was with her, and her uncle would speedily rejoin her: Godefroi need not remain, therefore, even to receive the bold Arragonese, who was to bring word of her step-father's safe conveyance into Spain: — she would see, and thank, and reward him herself.

Godefroi required no entreaty to do what his heart prompted; for the old man's fears concerning both Clarence and François, were stronger than her's: less wild, perhaps; but stronger, because they were accurately considered. At parting, as she averted her streaming eyes, chiding herself, meanwhile, and forcing

smile after smile, Godefroi besought her to take comfort; and promising to send whatever sure tidings he could obtain, he set off for his own home, with a heavier heart than he chose to show.

Aigline, left to weep unmolested — (for Thomasine relieved her from constant care of Cecile; and Monsieur St. André, seeing her struggling against some strong feeling, delicately enjoined his wife to leave her in salutary solitude) — Aigline, thus left, wept unresistingly: so bright a gleam had opened upon her fate so lately, that she was ill able to support this sudden darkening: she thought of Clarence's absent father with anguish of commiseration; and thinking of the Chevalier de Bourbon not only as the beloved of her sister, and the friend of Clarence, but as one eminently formed to interest and attach, she bewailed his death with a sincerity adequate to such considerations. In happier circumstances, Aigline would have mourn-

ed him even more keenly; at present her thoughts cleaved to dear and more agitating objects. All these were scattered: some in peril of life; others, threatened by grievous calamities; not one, except her newly-found relation, in security and peace!

On the evening of the day in which Godefroi left her, she had taken a book under some trees that grew in a narrow defile near her uncle's temporary residence, hoping so to station and calm her thoughts. It was a book of devotion, and the gift of Mr. Willoughby: his name was in the first page. This circumstance, added to observation of the flowers of the gentian growing out of clefts of the rock — flowers familiar to her on the heights above L'étoile — distracted her better purpose. She sat down on a loose block of granite, and fixing her eyes upon the azure tufts, thought of many a joyous moment in childhood, when Clarence used to climb precipices she shuddered

at, only to obtain for her a coveted cluster of these early flowers. As memory continued floating over such remembrances with sad, yet sweet emotion, Lolótte's dog, which had been lying quietly upon the ground, suddenly started up, seemed to listen a moment, then dashed through the undergrowth of the trees. Aigline looked round at this, and beheld a figure to startle her. A broad and brawny man, scarcely clothed; for his head, breast, and legs were bare: yet this scantiness of raiment seemed rather the effect of choice than of poverty; for he was well-armed, and had an expression of proud and fearless independence in his countenance, which suited with his bold and agile step. This person checked his forward movement at sight of Aigline, abruptly enquiring for Thomasine and Godefroi. Aigline considered his figure a moment; then at once trusting to her memory of many a sketch, drawn of this very man by

Clarence's vivid description, exclaimed, "You are — I am sure you are Leyrada!"

"I am, lady!" returned the guide, in bad Bearnese; "but who are you, that know me at a guess? and where is the old man?"

Aigline had not time to answer; for the bushes broken down on every side gave way before the rush of some other person, who, leaping out from amongst them, threw himself at her feet, — almost into her arms.

It was Clarence himself, that having encountered his old acquaintance, the Spanish smuggler, on the very confines of Biscay, whither he had gone from Escalette in search of him and Godefroi, learnt from him that Baron Roche Blanc was just embarking for England, and that Godefroi was awaiting news of him at Barêges. Thither Clarence hurried with Leyrada; and there they were directed for the residence of Thomasine

and the old soldier, to the chateau near Sainte Marie's. Clarence knew not, suspected not, that it was Aigline's residence: for Leyrada, when first questioned by him, had related that Godefroi spoke of the Baron de Roche Blanc's daughters as being left in painful suspense at Lourdes. It was the sight of Lolótte's dog that first startled him into joyful expectation: the sound of Aigline's voice completed his joy. Breaking from the direful throng of feelings which the caresses of an animal, once his friend's, excited within him, he flew to forget them for awhile, in the presence of her he loved. Aigline was now scarcely conscious: lost to recollection of every thing, save that happiness itself, in the clasp of Clarence. His heart was yet glowing with the conviction of being as tenderly beloved, as his wildest wishes could sigh for; (he treasured its proof in his breast;) and that emboldened him to press Aigline to his bosom with the

undoubting transport he did now. Leyrada was long forgotten by them both: and when remembering him, Clarence looked round to explain and thank him, he perceived the man was gone. Clarence knew Leyrada's character too well, to believe he went in displeasure; and momentarily admiring the honest sympathy this conduct denoted, he returned his thoughts and his eyes to Aigline.

To her, this scene was all dreamy, delightful, amazing, bewildering! Clarence, whom she had not dared to believe in life, — Clarence whom she had parted from in jealous anger on his side, and sorrowful constraint in hers, was now before her, covering her hands with kisses, which, though mingled indeed with sighs, expressed the most perfect understanding of her heart, and the tenderest constancy of his. But Clarence was in a mourning habit; and when the first glare of joy disappeared from his features, she

saw that they expressed passed and great suffering.

At this observation, she fixed her eyes tearfully upon his face; he was looking down at the instant, his heart suddenly checked by thought of Adhemar de Bourbon; he looked up while she was thus regarding him, and as his brimming eyes met the sad enquiry of her's, they overflowed; and burying his face in her hands, which he snatched to his lips, hid them there, in sorrowful answer.

"O heaven! then it is indeed true!" she exclaimed, for she could not mistake the nature and cause of his grief.

"Yes, Aigline!" Clarence answered, when he could speak, but it was long before that passion of memory calmed itself; — "I have lost him! — at the moment, I confess it seemed to me, that not even your love — that I was bereaved beyond comfort — (Clarence spoke convulsively, and at intervals) — but I

have suffered for you, since — I find you again, and life, therefore, is still precious !"

Aigline would not resist the movement which now drew her tightly to his heart: she spoke not by words: but her sighs, her tears, her movements in that long and mournful embrace, pledged her heart more surely to him, than any form of language. Few explanations were necessary to account for her former rejection of him; and as in giving these, Aigline's long and devoted preference developed itself unconsciously, in all its ardor; emotions of vivider happiness once more diffused their bright colours over Clarence's face. He naturally concluded, that Aigline quitted Lourdes in company with her step-father, whose safety he now assured her of; — how was he surprized and affected, when he heard the real circumstances of her departure! the discovery of her uncle, his great kindness, the respectful regard

with which she had considered him as the Abbé de Fontevraud, the ease and affluence thus assured to her after a season of bitterness and distress, were subjects of grateful rejoicing to Clarence; but something of apprehension seized him, on his own account, — something of generous unwillingness to accept now, what he fondly sued for, when he believed Aigline destitute. The Marquis de Venzéles might be determinately averse to his niece's engagement with one situated as Clarence was; and while the latter remembered how dubiously he was situated at present, he did not believe himself justified in retaining her hasty promise. With his usual openness and rapidity, he spoke these feelings as they arose.

Aigline at first combated them with serious argument: but the bashfulness of youth and devoted attachment would not let her proceed thus; and trying to veil embarrassment by gaiety, she just

glanced her smiling and blushing eye at him, exclaiming, "You were ever the fondest of the most difficult things, dear Clarence! — I was never your equal in the marvellous: — go, if it please you, in quest of sacrifices to make: but I — I, out of *my* diminished stock of blessings, cannot spare even *you!*"

She spoke the last words playfully, to moderate the tenderness of the sentiment they indicated; Clarence's eyes suffused with love and regret; yet there was transport too in his voice, as snatching her hand to his lips, he exclaimed, "I still less! — you and my father, are now my all!" a sigh not to be controlled, burst forth with the expression; but he smiled away its recollection, and pressing Aigline's hand again and again within his, talked of the moment in which it would be his for ever, with all the ardor of a first and last passion.

"This dear hand then is mine," he said, pressing and holding it to his

heart, "whenever I may claim it with honor and propriety! you have promised that no authority shall then refuse it to me!"

In what terms Aigline renewed this promise, it is useless to repeat; but so much had both to ask and to answer, so grievous were some of their subjects, and so doubtful others, that instead of entering the house, or remaining where intruders might join them, they gradually moved out of the defile in which they encountered, and wandering into the least frequented of the rocky walks within reach, conversed uninterruptedly. There, as their hearts opened to each other, as the tender tears of Aigline balsamed the yet bleeding wound of Clarence, a soft and sedate calm stole over both their spirits. The sting of future sorrow seemed as if it would henceforth be blunted to them. There were moments also, during which Clarence felt he was yet susceptible to thrills of absolute transport. As he

gazed upon Aigline, he saw that her positive beauty was tarnished: but the beauty of eighteen only droops, — a day's sunshine expands it again. Yet Clarence lamented not the stationary damask of her cheeks, when he saw those faded cheeks flushing perpetually into vivider bloom from sweet emotions! he saw not that the soft small hand he pressed fondly in his, was smaller and of a colder whiteness than it was wont; — that hand had traced the characters which had first renewed joy in his desolated heart; — that hand had since given itself to him for a life of weal or woe, — asking not which! — Eager therefore, to hasten the moment of its actual possession, Clarence avowed his inability to decide upon his own course. He wished to rejoin the Prince de Condé, he said, and ascertain whether François had reached his place of destination; — he yearned to seek his father, and terminate their great anxiety in England; yet he

wished to have one personal interview with the Marquis de Venzeles ere he went. Permitted by him to hope what Aigline had taught him to believe was probable, he thought he could then tear himself from her for a while, and return to take his part in the eventful scenes at Blois. The catastrophe of Adhemar's murderer had been told him, — revenge, therefore, was suffocated; but if confusion were about to follow, as was rumoured, — if the brave Condé were indeed in arms, Clarence thought his post was now by his side. Aigline, weeping and shuddering as she did at thought of a civil war, in which Clarence would be engaged, could not, however, combat his purposes: she had lived for her hard duties, and was she to stay the being she loved best, and desired ever to honor most, in the performance of his? — her heart answered no. It was decided, therefore, between them, that Clarence should immediately go to Roche Blanc,

where it was most likely her uncle would be found, and as Clarence would make Lourdes in his way, for the two purposes of seeing Godefroi, and hearing whether he knew aught of François; the intelligence he might thus collect, together with the result of his conference with de Venzeles, he could dispatch to Barêges, by Lancelot.

To agree upon parting, at the very period of meeting, was indeed a hard thing for two persons so attached, and so situated; but each of them were resolute not to fail in the sorest conflict of their lives.

As Clarence after another hour or two in the chateau, kissed off the tears which falling from Aigline's downcast eyes, dropt upon the hand he held in his, she sighingly exclaimed, "Ungrateful that we are! — this ought only to teach us, how much happiness we have yet to lose! — O, my Clarence!" she added, bright-

ening through her tears, "let us cherish grateful thoughts of the present blessing, whatever befall us!"

"I will cherish it, Aigline!" exclaimed Clarence, gazing on her with as much love as sadness in his eyes. "With Adhemar in the heaven I strive for hereafter, and you and my father on the earth you alone endear to me,—life has still an aim,—life has still abundant, overflowing happiness!"

Clarence turned then to Cecile; her hair and transparent complexion were like Lolótte's, and either that slight resemblance, or her obvious fate, moved him to greater tenderness for her, or he desired to remind Aigline that he believed her sister inseparable from her; kindly pressing her cheek, he said cheeringly, "Farewell, my sister! love Aigline and be sure of my affection in return." Cecile, ill as she was, answered by a smart repartee; and Clarence, as he tore

himself away, was obliged to smother a sigh, while fancying the additional scene of woe, in prospect for Aigline.

A bright moon was already in mid sky, illuminating therefore for a short time the black defile which leads from the valley of Barège, when Clarence proposed resuming his wanderings. On his previous entrance into the chateau, after the first courteous offers of hospitality, Monsieur St. André, understanding that he was a friend of childhood, seeing him in a mourning habit, and perhaps comprehending the nature of Aigline's interest in him, had considerately left them together, without other companion than Cecile, who remembering the laughter-loving humour of Clarence, was wild with joy at his appearance. Without seeking now to disguise their plighted affection, Aigline and he had gone on conversing, unrestrainedly, even before the capricious bantering little creature; for they had not time to waste upon nice-

nesses; and they had nothing to wish concealed. They were now to separate: they parted often, ere they parted finally; and as Clarence turned back from the latest point where he could have sight of Aigline, he saw her standing out from the ivied chateau, her dark hair floating on the night breeze, her upward face and clasped hands raised to heaven, as if asking a benediction on his departure; he thought she looked like some mediating or guardian angel, interceding for its earthly charge.

To Aigline's startled gaze, the moonshine enveloping his figure as he passed between the dark wall of rocks, so completely changed the hue of his garments, that ideas of shrouds and death, were instant and unavoidable. Her fancy was filled with previous images of alarm, (justified by circumstances), and its wildest superstitions might well be pardoned. "O, if we are to meet no more, Clarence!" she exclaimed with a convulsive gasp, as he

disappeared from her tearless eyes; she could not finish the dismally-prophetic sentence. The next moment she felt that if ever they met again, no past sorrow should abate the joy of such re-union. Thus are we taught, by increasing awe, and increasing gratitude, the great secret of human happiness: — temperance in our regrets, moderation in our expectations, and lively enjoyment of existing blessings.

CHAP. XII.

With a heart deeper indented by all he had suffered of good and evil, Clarence meanwhile pursued his way to Lourdes; there he found Godefroi, and almost before he enquired for Aigline's brother, he lavished on the old man every testimony of affectionate and grateful regard which his many services to Aigline, and his respectful fondness for himself, so justly merited.

Godefroi's russet cheek had many a drop of pleasure on it when he returned Clarence's cordial greetings, and heard of his happy meeting with Aigline; but he had no tidings of François. It was to be feared some mischance had hap-

pened to the poor boy on the road; or to the servant that was to have returned with news from him, had he reached the Prince de Condé's, and been welcomed by those he went to. Whatever was the cause, Clarence's business was to speed on towards his supposed residence; and scarcely allowing himself time to call upon the old soldier's sympathy with his loss of the gallant Adhemar, he spurred forward to Roche Blanc.

At sight of its vine-covered hamlet, of its half-dismantled chateau, and the wooded steeps and cataracts of L'étoile, gradually revealing under the glories of a rising sun, those feelings were revived, which Clarence wished silenced, for awhile at least: they blotted out later and happier ones; and checking the hired animal he rode, he sat fixed in melancholy meditation; his eyes rivetted to the chapel of the chateau.

The sound of a voice at a short distance, enquiring of a peasant the way to

L'étoile caught and secured his attention. As he rode forward to give the direction himself, he observed that both horseman and his horse were yet in a foam with heat and haste. The person galloped on to meet him, and he then recognized Maligny, and saw that he was half-armed; wearing his head-piece and breast-plate.

"Well met!" the latter exclaimed, stretching forth his hand to him — "I am going to give you sorry greeting: but I have ridden hard to tell you, there is foul play still going on against you in England; for Throckmorton has instructions to seize, and send you thither."

In amazement and consternation, Clarence questioned, what he meant? and Maligny still keeping on his horse, but drawing up close to his side, freely and briefly answered, though in an under and hurried voice.

The extent of his information was as follows: — Clarence was accused of being connected with that party, in his own

country, who had been anxious to dethrone Elizabeth and place Mary of Scotland in her seat. He was even said to have personally delivered to the latter, a packet of treasonable papers, which had been to Rome for the Pope's sanction; and that he had been seen in close conference, by Throckmorton himself, with one of the chief agents of this party. Elizabeth's orders were, to have him privately seized by her ambassador, (his supposed league with the Catholics in France militating against open measures) and sent at once to London, to answer these charges.

"And so I will!" exclaimed Clarence, all amazed with what he heard, yet unshrinking from the danger his conscience told him he had not merited: then remembering his actual delivery of the unexamined papers entrusted to him by the stranger at Etienne, and the extraordinary gratitude it excited in Queen Mary, he was at once confounded by

the strait in which he must soon be placed, between fidelity to a heedless engagement, and justifiable regard for his own character and safety.

"Where is my father?" he added, with a consternated look, as one wild fear suddenly seized him.

Maligny hesitated a moment:—"I do mean to tell you, so it is folly to delay—They have imprisoned him: as a sort of hostage, doubtless, for your appearance; but they cannot hurt him, nothing being alleged against his loyal proceedings. It is therefore easy for you to save yourself, if you wish to—"

"Maligny!" interrupted Clarence, "what devil prompts you to such injurious speech?"

"By this sword, I did not think you would try to save yourself—innocent or guilty!" exclaimed Maligny, extending his hand to him—"and innocent you are sure I think you:—but in every case, I would give a man of approved

honor, latitude to act differently from my expectations, without arraigning him for doing so. I therefore thought it well to let you know the whole affair. My prince has already said to the ambassador, and had previously dispatched to Elizabeth herself, all that our lamented Chevalier charged us to acquaint her with: — but you must be aware that even his dying testimony goes not far enough for wary statesmen. Your favor with Mary was acknowledged by her to him; but the cause of it she kept secret. I ask not a solution, for I know your integrity without stain; what you will boldly do, you will boldly say: — but others require school-men's proofs — mathematical demonstrations."

Clarence, in reply, wrung Maligny's hand: his heart was full of his father; and the name of de Bourbon passed by him, not unheeded, but unmarked by that peculiar sigh which had long echoed it, whenever, or by whomever pronoun-

ced. "No! his life is not safe!" he exclaimed, starting out of thought, yet speaking like one who thinks aloud; "I will to England on the instant! — his life endangered, cancels all bonds! — What I have to tell, cannot, surely, hurt any one! — Though I saw his face, I know not his name! Maligny, as you love me," he continued, turning to him with a hasty movement of recollection, "speed back to the court — see the young queen, or the Comtesse d'Enghien — some way or other, let this ring reach Mary of Scotland — she knows whither to send it — this is an *extremity!* Fool that I was to trammel myse f thus! O, gracious heaven! let not my dear father pay the penalty of my folly!"

Again Clarence broke off into questioning his companion. He then learned, in addition to what has been related, that the present disaster had occurred, in consequence of an actual plot being discovered in England for setting the queen

of Scots upon the throne, and proclaiming Arthur de la Pole Duke of Clarence: that on the arrest of some leading persons among the Papists, the latter had flown into France; carrying with him his niece, Rosamond Dudley, the half-sister of Clarence Willoughby. A letter, found among some papers which had been previously stolen from Rosamond, by a servant in pay of one employed on such services by the young lady's guardian, was the ground of accusation against her brother.—It was from Plantagenet de la Pole, and the formidable sentence ran thus:—"Of certain papers, I shall have much to tell you, when we meet next:—not the least amazing of my communications will be this plain fact, that they passed from my hand into that of your own brother, (henceforth my dear friend and cousin)—and by him were delivered to our lady and queen, Mary of Scotland, France and England. Sweet! puzzle not thyself how this should come

about, but turn thy gracious thought" — here the writer ran off into expressions merely lover-like, and Clarence was no more mentioned,

Maligny had procured a copy of this passage from the person, who knowing his regard for Willoughby, first gave him intimation of the sinister affair: it was one of the English ambassador's secretaries,—a young man more remarkable for good nature than strict fidelity. As Clarence read the extract, he became whiter than the paper it was written on, "I am lost!" he exclaimed, agonizing thought of Aigline turning him coward. —"I have then seen and conversed with this Plantagenet—and I must sink before such evidence — for I cannot deny it. Go Maligny — speed your commission — yet stay one moment! Know ye ought of a son of Baron de Roche Blanc's, who went to Blois?"

Maligny interrupted him with the assurance, that François was safe: that his

unmerited disgrace and artless affliction under it, had interested Condé so much, that he sent him instantly to Meaux for present shelter: and had undertaken to dispatch the comforting news to his sisters; but weightier matters must have driven it from his mind. — "I have now no more to enquire!" exclaimed Clarence with a grateful movement of his heart and eyes. "On — on to Blois, if you wish to save me the guilt of having murdered my father. Yet how to hope it! — Maligny, if I live, what impulse shall I ever again obey unquestioned? What feeling of the moment make me forgetful of possible consequences! — if I am *not* to live, receive this my latest attestation which I make with as true a soul as if I were the next moment to mount the scaffold: my faith has never swerved from my religion or my lawful sovereign queen Elizabeth!" — He stopt, oppressed by his own earnestness, then added more vehemently, "As

you value my soul's peace in the other world, deliver that ring—in private or in public—I care not which.—And now tell me what is doing in France?—Will Adhemar be avenged, and the people freed from their tyrants?"

Maligny stooped forward to his ear: We have now a hundred thousand hands and hearts ready to begin the terrible day of retribution! You guess the sword of fire that will go before us!"

"And if the whole host of Heaven rangeth not on your side"—exclaimed Clarence.

"If they fight not for us," returned Maligny, checking the other's impetuousness, by his soberer firmness, "we are of course destined for crowns of martyrdom: and at the stake, or on the gibbet, I will neither doubt the justice of the cause, nor the justice of God—nor yet repent the act which brought me there!"

Clarence looked on him with noble

envy. "Incomparable Maligny! farewell! — God knows whether we shall ever meet on this side eternity again! if we do not — this then is our leave-taking!" and stretching forward from his horse, he extended his arms to Maligny, the latter exchanged a sort of embrace with him: and for the moment was too much affected to speak. But shaking off certain recollections, and anticipations; or rather stirring his sense of wrong by the one, and re-animating his confidence with the other, he said cheeringly, "Our business lies in different roads now — but we may meet at the end of them — even on this dark earth! Wherever we do, let it be with honest hearts, and then, no matter how we meet. If you conquer in England, and I 'live to run away' in France, you shall not be left to forget me in your day of prosperity, depend upon it!" — Maligny spoke with a smile, kindly meant to bring one to the altered lips of Clarence. But that amia-

ble smile only played over his heart like a transient sunbeam upon snow;—it warmed it not: nothing now could take the mortal chillness thence, except assurance of his father's life and liberation. Striving, however, to recompence benevolent intention, by an effort to do so, he said something in a cheerfuller tone than before; and once more recommending Aigline's young brother to the care of Maligny, and commending the latter and the brave Condé to Heaven's especial favor, he pressed his hand strongly, and rode away.

Clarence's first anxiety after this, was to enquire for the Marquis de Venzeles. He was happily found at the chateau which he had succeeded in making his own nominal property for awhile, and thus securing it for young François, after present persecution should cease. On being admitted to the uncle of Aigline, Clarence's errand, with its sorrowful addition, was soon told. His interesting

countenance, and more agitated address, added to the favorable impression already made for him upon de Venzeles.

The youthful simplicity with which he confessed his feelings and his situation, formed an agreeable contrast to the manly spirit and sound understanding that developed themselves in his avowed purposes; while the generous confidence with which he appeared to reckon upon the sympathy and indulgence of the marquis, could not fail to flatter and to touch him. Clarence asked nothing which Aigline's relation could fear to grant: he merely besought permission to hope for his favor, when he could present himself to claim it, with a cleared fame, and a rank not unworthy the niece of a Marquis de Venzeles. "But if my doubtful destiny is fated to end in the loss of life," he added, smothering a sigh for others besides himself, "if my dear father also — then L'étoile is Aigline's: all that has life there, she will

cherish for my sake —— and for my friend's." Clarence thought of some old favorites as he spoke, — of Adhemar's house in particular. He then put a paper into de Venzeles' hand, which he had hastily written, ere he entered the chateau: and proceeding to state his plan of instantly making for the first French port, and thence sailing for the nearest one in England, he besought de Venzeles to delay this information as long, and to soften it as much as possible to Aigline. Deceiving her eventually, he could not endure to think of: — even the most laudable concealments (if any may ever be called so) — were now abhorrent to him. How cruelly had he suffered by one forced on him! — His complexion varied with every word he uttered, while speaking of Aigline; but he commanded his voice and his language; and had it not been for these changes of colour, indicating struggles like those between life and death, de

Venzeles might not have comprehended either the extent of his apprehensions for himself, or the anguish with which he contemplated the probable blow to Aigline. He was, indeed, greatly interested by Clarence; but such mystery unavoidably covered that part of Clarence's present situation, which he owed to his connexion with the stranger, that a man of middle life was justified in some reservation of confidence. His own manner, however, was marked by sincerity, and the inclination to trust; and at parting he returned Clarence's agitated pressures of the hand, with no slight degree of emotion. Clarence went not to L'étoile: and he trusted himself only to look upon the walls of the chapel where Adhemar de Bourbon and the sister of Aigline lay united in death. Long and earnest was that look: tears at length blinded him, and obliterated the object. He turned away, stilling the rising agony of certain recollections, by

remembering that a heavier calamity hung over him.

Innumerable nightingales were singing round the chapel, embosomed in the high trees that overshadowed it: in the stillness of morning, the sound was like a choir of angels. The welcoming of blessed spirits in paradise, suddenly presented itself to Clarence's imagination; and yielding to the instant seizure of such a thought, he suffered himself to be snatched away at once from earth to heaven, where he beheld the purified and beatified spirit of his friend, in the midst of all the great and good that have successively peopled and passed away from this lower world.

"What there he saw, was equal extasy:
"One universal smile it seemed of all things;
"Joy past compare, gladness unutterable,
"Imperishable life of peace and love,
"Exhaustless riches and unmeasured bliss!"

It was long ere this holy rapture subsided, not till he had removed from the

spot where it commenced; and then it faded by degrees into soberer calm, and self-searching reflection. Peculiarly sensible to the sinfulness of late desperation, now that new misfortunes menaced him, he asked himself whether he had not lamented Adhemar de Bourbon, as though he had nought more to lose in life? And had he not refused consolation on the subject until this very moment? On this mental inquisition he roused himself; determining henceforth to meet the utmost rigor of destiny, with that constancy of mind which becomes one, who believing in the blessed promise of immortality, sorrows not even when bereaved of every earthly joy, "like them that have no hope." Clarence however had hope, grounded upon the obvious nobleness of the person that had involved him in danger. This hope, however, depended mainly upon the safety and rapidity with which Maligny might be able to convey the important

signet: — yet what chances were against this! Clarence could not doubt now that the stranger of Etienne was his cousin Plantagenet de la Pole, the chosen of his sister; and, while he thought of him in that endearing relation, and recalled his look and language, he felt a generous — an affectionate anxiety (distinct from other motives) that he should indeed redeem the pledge he made to him at Blois, and substantiate the magnanimous character fancy had coupled with his expressive physiognomy. As Clarence spurred forward to the coast, he met everywhere news of panic and alarm: finally, he learnt that the king and court were transferred from Blois to the strong city of Amboise; that a rising of the Protestants was expected all over France; and that arrests and seizures were multiplying in every province. Amid such confusion and change, he dreaded the fate of Maligny's commission upon which so much depended: — he thought of

Aigline, in whose tender embrace his heart had so recently lost its bitterest griefs, even to rapture; and when he imagined her probable distraction, his best resolutions faltered. But once more reviving himself by the acknowledgment of being in the hands of a good and wise God, he felt that to entitle himself to divine favor, he must proceed in straight forward duty. His business now was to hasten the moment of his father's liberation, by giving himself up to trial, and possible punishment. Our hero was fortunately provided with money, and at Bourdeaux a vessel was speedily hired and made ready for sea. He embarked at once in her, trusting to a prosperous wind for quicker conveyance to England than might have been the case in the distracted provinces he must have passed through ere he reached the narrowest strait between the two shores. But the wind proved faithless, and he did not descry the high shore of Cornwall until

he had been tortured through many more days and nights than he had taken into his calculation.

Careless of rest or refreshment, he quitted the ship only to mount on horseback, and speed forward to London with the same haste, (alas, with how different a heart!) as when he and Adhemar had visited the same island a few months before. Clarence had not leisure even for this bitter recollection: he had but one object now; and he thought of nothing, heard nothing that had not connection with his father's safety. On the road, he heard of several noblemen and gentlemen being in prison on account of the Popish plot against the queen; but no executions had yet taken place. His father lived then: unless grief, and anxiety, and apprehension for him had hastened him out of life. At this thought, Clarence redoubled the speed of his journey; riding breathless, and bloodless, as though he carried the reprieve of some

condemned wretch, and feared arriving too late. His heart might be said to be fixed in prayer the whole way. Never indeed had Clarence prayed so earnestly, so uninterruptedly; never had he made such bitter confession of his own impatience under other sorrows, nor such sincere promises of amendment in future trial! Alas, this very earnestness and importunity proved that his heart was not yet sufficiently schooled into submission. His lessons in life began early: —a token that his life was to be short or memorable!

On reaching the English capital, he delayed not for alteration in his attire, but ran, disordered as he was, to the house of Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary. His business admitted him. The secretary listened to his hurried narrative with grave attention: but of all his interrogatories answered only that which was prompted by filial anxiety; Mr. Willoughby, he said, was uninjured and in

health; but until her majesty's pleasure was known, he could not grant any order for the meeting of father and son. Cecil gave Clarence farther to understand, that the plot against the queen was already investigated, the sense of the jury and judges taken, and her majesty at this moment considering whether to ratify or annul it. In this judgment, of course, Clarence's fortune and life were involved, with the happiness of those dearest to him; and as he bowed his head in enforced submission to Cecil, who declining to state the sentence already given, locked him in and left him — he felt a stillness of heart, a sort of expectancy of every sense, that was more intolerable to endure, than the most rapid alternation of hope and fear, or the severest paroxysm of absolute despair.

Nearly an hour of such mental racking was the fate of Clarence: but it was overpaid! —— Cecil re-appeared

with the blessed news that the innocence of Clarence was proved to Elizabeth's satisfaction; and that in deciding, without further process, upon his right to the high privileges his father had so long claimed for him, she expected to bind a grateful and loyal subject to her service for ever.

As Clarence by a grateful impulse dropt on one knee to thank Elizabeth in the person of her representative, his lifted eyes caught those of his father: he started up again, and threw himself, without speaking, into the arms that opened as mutely to receive him.

Such joy was too much, for one so exhausted in body and mind. Clarence's powers were indeed over-tasked; and, as his father held him against his heart, he seemed to hold there the corpse of his son: so pale, so silent, so lifeless was Clarence! — By degrees the stunning of joy went off; and, awaking to the full sense of his present happiness, and of

God's mercies, Clarence broke into passionate expressions of thankfulness, in which the name of her he loved best, was unconsciously joined with his own.

Happiness, indeed, was now rained upon him by bounteous heaven: and if the shade of Adhemar de Bourbon wandered upon earth to wait the crisis of his friend's fate, it must have brightened in this blissful moment, and ascended on more rapturous wing to the height of immortal joy! — Plantagenet de la Pole had proved himself worthy the exalted trust of Clarence: he had not even waited the reminding signet; but, on the first intimation of Mr. Willoughby's seizure, had torn himself from the arms of Rosamond Dudley (whom that very morning previously made his bride) and in despite of her distracting tears, or his father's entreaties, (inflexible in honor,) passed over into England; avowing his own share in a plot, which both his political and religious sentiments, (as no injury

was meditated against Elizabeth's life,) made him consider justifiable in him, but in Clarence Willoughby, he knew, would be a crime of the deepest dye! The evidence he voluntarily gave, entirely freed Clarence from suspicion, and that was in a degree borne out by the transmitted evidence of the Prince de Condé. Elizabeth waited only for the appearance of the accused himself through the agency of Throckmorton, when his sudden appearance, and corroborating testimony to her secretary, at once satisfied her lingering scruples, and determined in his favour.

Sentence of confiscation and death had been passed upon the elder and younger De la Pole. But policy, as the former was refuged amongst her enemies, — and we will believe the human feeling of kindred, induced Elizabeth to change the fearful word death, into banishment. Plantagenet de la Pole's habitual respect to the authority of his high-spirited

father, and his avowed passion for Rosamond Dudley, were allowed to plead in extenuation of his offence: his character, besides, stood so high with the people, that Elizabeth deemed it no mean act of state wisdom to draw him to her by affection, and so insure the gratitude, or at least disarm the rancour of her Catholic nobles. Her wrath, however, against his father, she attempted not to dissimulate; by that very circumstance, perhaps, making to herself some new claims upon the future services of his son. She remitted the sentence of death even in his case; but rigorously enforced that of perpetual exile: aggravating the punishment, to a proud nature like his, by full acknowledgement of Clarence Willoughby's claims, and consequent relationship to herself. Much of Clarence's good fortune was certainly attributable to circumstances: Elizabeth's sceptre was yet unsteady in her grasp; Philip in Spain, Mary in France, and her own Catholic

subjects sought to wrest it from her. It behoved her, therefore, to conciliate even individuals likely to add but the weight of a feather in the scale for or against her interest; and Clarence Willoughby, eminently regarded by that Adhemar de Bourbon, who was now called by the French Protestants a martyr, as well as hero, became, independently of other considerations, a fit subject for her political graciousness. She called him to her presence; talked to him of his murdered friend; listened with keen interest, to his often interrupted and agitated account of the Chevalier's last scene; and learnt from him, so much more intimately than she had ever known, the pure purposes, and great qualities of the Prince de Condé, that to this interview might be traced the important assistance and steady friendship, for which that prince and his adherents were afterwards indebted to the queen of England.

From this audience Clarence was

commanded to be the bearer of her majesty's signal pardon to Plantagenet de la Pole; after admonishing him against future league with her enemies, as he hoped to preserve some portion of her regard as a kinswoman, though he might disallow her as his queen. He was permitted also to intimate, that even a Catholic heart, in a loyal bosom, would not be disdained by her, when properly laid at her feet. His sentence of banishment, therefore, was reversible.

What passed in this meeting, between two persons so situated, and of the liveliest sensibilities, may be very easily imagined: — both were faithful to the private affections and public principles in which they had been educated; and both so conscientiously, that their firmness in them could not diminish that sentiment of enthusiastic admiration which attracted them to each other. Plantagenet de la Pole, as he embraced his cousin and brother, yielded to him

with expressions of self-censure, the rights he could have never wished disputed, had he not been taught by his prejudiced father to believe them unfairly obtained by the elder Willoughby, and incapable of legal proof. In this interview, many plans were suggested, and affectionate arrangements made, to improve their acquaintance into friendship, and lessen the unavoidable regrets of all connected with them, upon certain personal subjects.

Clarence consented to retain the fortune awarded to him in preference to his sister, upon condition that de la Pole should accept of L'étoile for her, as some equivalent. The birth place of his father, (redeemable now, in consequence of so large a sum being at Clarence's disposal,) would, undoubtedly, make up to Mr. Willoughby for this dear, though distant residence.

The gift was accepted by the despoiled Plantagenet, in the same noble spirit with which it would have been offered by the

receiver, had his circumstances and Clarence's been exchanged, — and straining each other to their hearts, with inward assurance that they were destined at last to live near, and grow into one, — they parted, to meet again!

* * * * * *

Four months after this, in L'étoile itself, — in that abode endeared by so many joys, — sanctified by so many sorrows, — and instructed by their remembrance to greater thankfulness for the one, and truer submission to the other; Clarence received the hand of Aigline from her uncle's. He stood encircled by a groupe, composed of his sweet sister, his father, and Plantagenet de la Pole. François le Marot was there too; and the good old man whom Aigline loved to call her benefactor and friend. Baron de Roche Blanc was far away. At the moment of his landing in England, where he fled from the rage of Anthony Bourbon, some discovery-ships were sailing, and he was

told that Mr. Willoughby, whom he came to seek, was in confinement. Caught by the temptation, he embarked in one of these ships, without giving a second thought to home, children, friend, or creditors. He was absent; and Cecile's place too was vacant. She slept with others better and dearer, in the vault of the Marots. The cherished images of these dear departed ones, passing before the eyes of Clarence and Aigline, even in this bright noon of their happiness, threw over it a shade of saddening recollection, necessary perhaps to veil its exceeding brightness. Clarence recovered himself with a sigh from the mournful depth into which Adhemar's memory had plunged his thoughts: he looked upon his father, whose preservation from the evil that had lately threatened him, was now a shield against unhallowed regrets. That honored aspect without visible cloud, brightened his own as he regarded it; and when his eye

moved from it, to that of Plantagenet de la Pole, nobly calm, and powerfully-informed with intellect, he thought of his magnanimous surrender of happiness at the command of conscience; and felt that if he might never agitate him to such romantic interest as de Bourbon had done, the steadier flame of his character, would prove a surer beacon to confidence, and generous rivalry in virtue.

Tenderness, trust, sympathy, — every gentle and balmy affection, then sought and rested upon Aigline, whose soft hand trembling in his, and downcast look palpitating under the passionate fixture of his lengthened gaze, whispered to him of future blessedness. That prophecy was fulfilled: Clarence lived to see honor, and happiness, and friendship flourish anew around him, in his own country; and while lamenting Adhemar de Bourbon with a chastened and juster measure of sorrow, than he had done at first, in maturer years he proved his lasting

fidelity to this earliest bond of heart, by devotedness to the religion, and to the kindred of him he mourned.

What flames of persecution and civil war consumed the fair fields of France, during this period! — What streams of gallant blood mixed with her rivers, and deluged her scaffolds, are not for these pages to relate! The eventful history of those times will tell; and tell the efficient aid of Elizabeth and of her bravest subjects. Maligny's name is foremost in the authentic page. When he refuged in England, waiting until his prince could rally his faithful friends around him again, and make glorious head once more against the enemies of God and man, — Clarence Willoughby's roof gave him joyful shelter — Clarence Willoughby's open arms, warm welcome!

* * * * *

That man is happy, even after many sore misfortunes, — who possessing only one dear companion, bound to him by

natural and voluntary ties, has the rare felicity besides, of testifying gratitude and repaying benefits! Such a lot was transcended by that of Clarence. He had a father, — sister, — wife, — friend, — whose virtues and affections seemed to grow with his years: and if in manhood he renounced many of his wild visions, and much of that rashness and precipitancy of judgment which sullied his youth, — instructed by a seemingly-authorizing Providence, he returned to the earliest principle of his heart, resolving never to stifle one kind or generous impulse, at the suggestion of selfish prudence; assured that He who implants the benevolent feeling, will "with the temptation" to its indulgence, make — not "a way to escape," but a way to its blest and blessing exercise!

THE END.

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